



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE U.S.  
REBALANCING POLICY ON THE STABILITY OF  
NORTHEAST ASIA**

by

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December 2015

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**AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE U.S. REBALANCING POLICY  
ON THE STABILITY OF NORTHEAST ASIA**

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requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

Focusing on potential economic development in Asia and acknowledging the stake of U.S. interests in the region, the United States has tried to foster secure international circumstances and promote cooperation among Asian countries. These U.S. efforts have been manifested most recently in the “Pivot to Asia” or “Asia rebalancing policy.” But, contrary to the intention of the rebalancing policy, the security environment of Northeast Asia has become unstable while all actors pursue their respective security and national interests. Given this current situation, this thesis focuses on the following question: Is the U.S. rebalancing policy toward Asia contributing to Northeast Asia stability?

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
A.	<b>MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
B.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
C.	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.	<b>The Intention of the Asia Rebalancing Policy .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.	<b>Problems in Rebalancing Policy .....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.	<b>Shortcomings of the Current Debate .....</b>	<b>9</b>
D.	<b>POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES .....</b>	<b>11</b>
E.	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>12</b>
F.	<b>THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>THE DIPLOMATIC ASPECT OF THE ASIA REBALANCING POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATION ON NORTHEAST ASIA .....</b>	<b>17</b>
A.	<b>THE U.S. MULTILATERAL APPROACH .....</b>	<b>17</b>
B.	<b>BILATERAL APPROACH .....</b>	<b>22</b>
C.	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>THE MILITARY ASPECT OF THE ASIA REBALANCING POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON NORTHEAST ASIA.....</b>	<b>31</b>
A.	<b>AIR-SEA BATTLE VS. ANTI-ACCESS/AREA-DENIAL .....</b>	<b>32</b>
B.	<b>JAPAN’S MILITARY RISE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE     ASIA REBALANCING POLICY .....</b>	<b>37</b>
C.	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>THE NUCLEAR ASPECT OF THE ASIA REBALANCING POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON NORTHEAST ASIA.....</b>	<b>45</b>
A.	<b>EXTENDED DETERRENCE COMMITMENT.....</b>	<b>46</b>
B.	<b>DENUCLEARIZATION OF NORTH KOREA .....</b>	<b>50</b>
C.	<b>CONTROLLING SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN.....</b>	<b>53</b>
D.	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>57</b>
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....</b>	<b>69</b>

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area-Denial
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EAS	East Asia Summit
EDPC	Extended Deterrence Policy Committee
JSDF	Japanese Self Defense Forces
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific Exercise
ROK	Republic of Korea
SCM	Security Consultative Meeting
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense Missile
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTX	Table Top Exercise
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
UN	United Nations
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

With the premise that the Asia-Pacific region would be critical to future international relations, the United States introduced its “reorienting” policy to Asia.<sup>1</sup> There was also some level of anticipation that the U.S. investments into this area would be rewarded politically, economically, and militarily through the cooperation of key pivot partners.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on this potential possibility of economic development and acknowledging the chance of U.S. interest, Washington has tried to foster secure international circumstances to promote cooperation among Asian countries. So, to emphasize cooperation and facilitate U.S. economic gains, U.S. policy makers have let the country’s military power assure the security of Asia-Pacific. This grand strategy of the United States was called “Pivot to Asia” or “Asia rebalancing policy.”

The regional security situation of Asia, however, has become unstable while all actors pursue their respective security and national interests. This is especially true in Northeast Asia, where South Korean and Japanese officials currently perceive China’s growing military power as an encountered or potential threat to their national security. China’s effort to resist the strategic behaviors of the United States and its allies and to keep its security and interests is also building military tension. Given this current situation, this thesis answers the following question: Is the U.S. rebalancing policy toward Asia contributing to Northeast Asian stability?

### **B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

The Asia rebalancing policy is the Obama administration’s main strategy toward Asia, and many Asian countries have constructed close relations with Washington under the keynote of rebalancing. In Northeast Asia, all nations except North Korea have improved relationships in accordance with the rebalancing policy. South Korea and Japan

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<sup>1</sup> Kurt M. Campbell and Ely Ratner, “Far Eastern Promises: Why Washington Should Focus on Asia,” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (2014), ProQuest (1520424131).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

have been strong allies of the United States, and these countries are now the essential partners in the U.S. rebalance. Participating in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) system, tightening security relationships, and increasing diplomatic engagements are meaningful advancements of the rebalancing. Notably, Japan has become the most valuable partner in the U.S. rebalance through multiple high-level engagements, including the bilateral summit. China also has tried to establish a constructive relationship with the United States. China has recognized that past confrontations with the United States did not help its national interests, so official high-level engagement to promote a more cooperative relationship is progressing in several ways.

Despite these efforts toward cooperation, there are still tensions between Northeast Asian countries that are causing regional security problems. China is showing great repulsion to the U.S. military's involvement in Northeast Asia, and some scholars and officers even argue that Washington wants to use its allies to "contain" Beijing. Contrary to this theory, Northeast Asia's U.S. allies, who are concerned about the potential danger of growing Chinese military power, are becoming more dependent on the alliance system, which provokes China militarily. In addition, North Korea's nuclear arsenal is intensifying this antagonistic structure by causing U.S. allies to rely on U.S. nuclear deterrence assets such as Terminal High Altitude Area Defense Missile (THAAD) and by keeping its distance from China due to its hesitation in pressuring the North Korea regime.

To find a peaceful solution to this complex situation in Northeast Asia and to construct a more stable basis for further cooperation and development in the region, this thesis reevaluates whether or not the U.S. rebalancing of Asia promotes stability. Considering that the United States has huge leverage over Northeast Asia region, critical evaluation of the U.S. policy is appropriate for the region, and this process provides the opportunity to evaluate how Northeast Asian players cope with the implications of U.S. foreign policy.

## C. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the Asia Rebalancing Policy, along with its shortcomings and the problems it has encountered, are reviewed.

### 1. The Intention of the Asia Rebalancing Policy

Since former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton first discussed the “pivot to Asia” in 2011, there have been several arguments about this concept.<sup>3</sup> Scholars and government officials from several countries analyzed the U.S. pivot using their own perspectives of Asia region. Even in the United States, the interpretation of the U.S. pivot to Asia policy has not yet coincided among professional researchers. These different views about the U.S. policy reflect the facts that U.S. activities in Asia can be understood in diverse ways and that there can be a gap between the intent of Washington and how other countries recognize the policy.

The U.S. rebalancing policy, originally known as pivot to Asia, means the U.S. national focus will shift to Asia for the purpose of achieving U.S. national goals. This policy, however, does not suggest that the United States is becoming newly interested in Asia region. U.S. presence in Asia has had a long history. The United States acknowledged the value of Asia region more than two centuries ago, and it has since interacted with Asia in various ways, “including business, religious groups, educational organizations, foundations, and the media.”<sup>4</sup> World War II motivated the United States to pay greater attention to the Asia-Pacific region as a way to further its national interests, and the Cold War made this region more valuable to America “militarily, economically, and diplomatically.”<sup>5</sup> The post-Cold War governments, the Clinton and Bush administrations, also showed vigorous engagements with Asia region. Their engagements included emphasizing the usefulness of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC),

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<sup>3</sup> Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy* 189 (November 2011): 57, ProQuest (925702002).

<sup>4</sup> Robert G. Sutter, Michael E. Brown, and Timothy J. A. Adamson, “Balancing Acts: The U.S. Rebalance and Asia-Pacific Stability,” *RPI Policy Report* (August 2013): 5, [http://www.risingpowersinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/BalancingActs\\_Compiled1.pdf](http://www.risingpowersinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/BalancingActs_Compiled1.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

engaging and deterring China, making solid relationships with partners through economy and security issues, and executing joint exercises.<sup>6</sup> As U.S. efforts in Asia have continued for centuries, the rebalancing policy toward Asia can be regarded as the redistribution of U.S. national abilities and the reestablishment of regional priority in policy making.<sup>7</sup>

The original intent of the rebalancing policy was to strengthen the relationship through U.S. alliances and multilateral institutions by sharing economic benefits. Military involvement would ensure a peaceful security environment for the improvement of relations. This idea of the rebalancing policy can be noted in the article that Hillary Clinton wrote in *Foreign Policy*, “America’s Pacific Century.” She proclaimed the necessity of U.S. investment in the Asia-Pacific area and foresaw that the Asia-Pacific area would be “a key of global politics.”<sup>8</sup> With respect to alliances, improving allies’ defense capabilities toward the common objectives was the key point in the new security circumstances, which were characterized by “new opportunities,” “new challenges,” and “provocation from the full spectrum of state and [non-state] actors.”<sup>9</sup> Redistributing U.S. forces in Asia region to react more efficiently to security problems was another way of upgrading security and stability.<sup>10</sup> Focusing on the economic investment opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region and the resulting benefits for U.S. economic restoration, President Obama also attempted to keep “peace and security” of this area by controlling and modifying the military characteristics of the area’s players.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the Asia rebalancing policy could be considered a cooperation-increasing policy in the economic area through an expansion of U.S. contacts in Asian nations, and strengthening its military power and relationships with allied countries provided a stable situation for the animated inter-state cooperation.

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<sup>6</sup> Sutter, Brown, and Adamson, “Balancing Acts,” 5–7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>8</sup> Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” 57.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



Interpretations that are similar to this original intention of the rebalancing policy have been shared between several scholars. Robert G. Sutter et al. say, “the rebalancing has been driven by a much broader set of strategic, economic, and political considerations,” and “the fundamental goals of the new U.S. policy are to broaden areas of cooperation beneficial to the United States with regional states and institutions.”<sup>12</sup> Bryan P. Truesdell, a colonel in the U.S. Army, focuses on “Asia-Pacific’s substantial population growth, diversity and abundant natural resources combined with the extensive economic growth across the region,” and views the rebalancing policy as “ensuring the U.S. can continue to influence the stability and security of the Asia-Pacific region and be able to participate in the vast economic potential there.”<sup>13</sup> Like these authors, most scholars embrace the original concept and peaceful intention of the rebalancing policy.

There is another interpretation of the U.S. rebalancing policy among scholars and officials: containing or countering China. Robert S. Ross regards the rebalancing policy as “a shift in strategy aimed at bolstering the United States’ defense ties with countries throughout the region and expanding the U.S. naval presence.”<sup>14</sup> Following his argument, the United States needs to reinforce its military power in Asia and reassure partner states with enhanced U.S. presence; at the same time it should consider the rise of Chinese military capabilities and the worries of its allies in Asia region.<sup>15</sup> Christopher Layne views the rebalancing policy as “an attempt to contain the rise of a potential hegemon, such as China.”<sup>16</sup> He calls this activity “off-shore balancing,” characterized as the dependence on “naval and air power” and “burden-sharing with Pacific Rim allies.”<sup>17</sup> In response, Phillip C. Saunders says, “this group emphasizes military elements of the

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<sup>12</sup> Sutter, Brown, and Adamson, “Balancing Acts,” 9.

<sup>13</sup> Bryan P. Truesdell, “Balance within the Rebalance: The Supporting Role of the U.S. Military in the Asia-Pacific Region,” *Asia Pacific Security Study* (June 2014): 2, <http://www.apcss.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Truesdell-Rebalance-2014.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Robert S. Ross, “The Problem with the Pivot: Obama’s New Asia Policy Is Unnecessary and Counterproductive,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 6 (2012), ProQuest (1223496273).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Spangler, “Rebalancing the Rebalance,” *Parameters* 44, no. 2 (2014): 12, ProQuest (1565830293).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

rebalance, especially U.S. military deployments, the developments of new military capabilities, and expanded security cooperation with allies and partners.”<sup>18</sup> Scholars of this school see the U.S. partners in Asia as players “to challenge Chinese sovereignty and provoke China into military overreactions that would damage its strategic position in Asia.”<sup>19</sup> This view sees the U.S. rebalancing policy as stemming from Washington’s concerns about China’s military strengthening and Beijing’s worries about the U.S. improving military capabilities.

As described previously, there are two different viewpoints on the U.S. rebalancing policy; one is very close to the original and peaceful concept of the rebalancing policy, but the other concentrates on the military aspect of the rebalance. As Hillary Clinton saw the Asia-Pacific region as “a key driver of global politics” and emphasized the economic potentials of the region, the U.S. rebalancing of Asia is a relation-centered and cooperation-aimed national strategy.<sup>20</sup> Most scholars share this idea and keep their view when they analyze the behavior of the United States. They do not think the U.S. intention of rebalance is to contain China. On the contrary, they regard the U.S. policy as embracing China through bilateral or multilateral systemic engagements to construct a more stable Asia region favorable to sharing the enormous profits that will be generated in that area.

But some scholars’ views do not reflect the official position of the U.S. government. This party focuses on the increase in U.S. military troop levels and assets in Asia and the advancement of U.S. military strategy to employ them. These scholars also look at China’s rising military capabilities and see Asia as the dichotomous area between the U.S. camp and the Chinese camp, similar to the world’s division during the Cold War era. To them, the U.S. approach to its rebalancing partners are reactions against China aimed at consolidating the anti-China military efforts of adjacent countries.

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<sup>18</sup> Phillip C. Saunders, “China’s Rising Power, the U.S. Rebalance to Asia, and Implications for U.S.-China Relations,” *Issues & Studies* 50, no. 3 (September 2014): 41, <http://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/82/Documents/chinas-rising-power.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” 57.

Consequently, this school argues that the objectives of the U.S. rebalancing policy is containing China or balancing China's growing national power.

## **2. Problems in Rebalancing Policy**

Despite the peaceful notion of Washington on the rebalance, there are many worrying views about the U.S. policy. This concern is originated from judgment about instability and tension-rising in Asia region. Scholars who have anxious views about the U.S. policy can be classified into two groups: one that finds the policy's problems lie with the United States, and the other that argues the problem is China.

Claims of the school of blaming the United States are that the U.S. rebalancing policy provokes China. Following the argument of Ross, "the Obama administration's pivot has not contributed to stability in Asia;"<sup>21</sup> instead, "it has made the region more tense and conflict-prone."<sup>22</sup> He argues that China has strong military power to protect the regime's legitimacy and to satisfy the nationalists' request in the insecure situation of "several nerve-racking years of financial crisis and social unrest."<sup>23</sup> He explains this choice is inevitable because China's economic capability is not sufficient to solve those financial problems.<sup>24</sup> In this situation, the U.S. rebalance from a military aspect is happening on the basis of overassessment of China's military capabilities and excessive security reassurance for the U.S. allies and partners.<sup>25</sup> These U.S. behaviors are threatening the will of the Chinese government that wants to prove its legitimacy with military strength, so China takes a more aggressive posture "to guarantee its security" from the United States and its partners.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, U.S. efforts to promote a more stable Asia result in a more hostile China and more unstable security circumstances.

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<sup>21</sup> Ross, "The Problem with the Pivot."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Michael Spangler's opinion about the rebalance is somewhat similar to Ross's in his perspective that U.S. support to its allies in maritime disputes and reliance on multilateral institutions stimulate the security concerns of China.<sup>27</sup> He argues that the United States' dependence on the regulative and normative authority of international institutions is not helpful in resolving the maritime conflicts between China and its partner states.<sup>28</sup> According to his argument, because of China's "refusing to recognize the 'authority' or 'expertise' of international bodies," Washington should move its emphasis from multilateral efforts to bilateral efforts, and through this shift, the "rebalancing initiative"—[matching] international security cooperation with robust economic activity within the Pacific Rim"—can be achieved easily.<sup>29</sup> The common idea of this school is that the United States causes the current unstable situation due to its incorrect understanding of China.

Contrary to these scholars, the opposite side criticizes China's misunderstanding and nationalistic movement toward the U.S. rebalancing policy. Sutter et al. point out that confrontation between the United States and China around the rebalancing policy was lessened with U.S. efforts to engage China more diplomatically and less militarily.<sup>30</sup> Considering that "most regional powers hope that the United States and China will be able to work together and . . . promote regional stability and order," Sutter et al. say that China should control its assertiveness to prevent "increased U.S.-China friction that would also be unwelcome in the region and at odds with the U.S. interest in regional stability."<sup>31</sup> China's aggressiveness stems from "growing Chinese nationalist sentiment and growing military power and other coercive capabilities that are now available to Chinese policy makers," and these factors are hard to be influenced by the United States.<sup>32</sup> So, Sutter et al. think the Chinese leadership's decisions and attitude toward

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<sup>27</sup> Spangler, "Rebalancing the Rebalance," 13.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Sutter, Brown, and Adamson, "Balancing Acts," 29.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Asia region is key to the successful and peaceful coexistence of the United States and China and the pursuit of their national interests.<sup>33</sup>

Another scholar, Phillip Saunders, focuses on the “strategic thrust between the U.S. and Chinese leaders.”<sup>34</sup> In spite of the U.S. effort to explain its non-containing and non-aggressive features of the rebalancing policy, Chinese scholars and officials continue to suspect the intentions of Washington.<sup>35</sup> China does not believe in the fairness of the U.S. attitude on maritime disputes and the needs for peaceful cooperation.<sup>36</sup> The Chinese government even argues that the U.S. commitment makes its partner countries confident militarily and that this confidence gives rise to military tension between them and China.<sup>37</sup> In this situation, to assure U.S. friends and to prevent China’s anxious response, Saunders emphasizes establishment of “strategic thrust.”<sup>38</sup> As stated previously, scholars of this school state that authentic U.S. efforts for a peaceful approach have continued in Asia region, but China’s mistrust and misunderstanding makes the U.S. efforts ineffective and creates an unstable environment.

### **3. Shortcomings of the Current Debate**

As just reviewed, studies about the Asia rebalancing policy find the problems of the policy in two distinctive areas: China’s confrontational posture toward the United States and its partners and the United States’ immature treatment of China. But beyond this debate, these analyses all focus too much on the relationship of these two primary countries. There are many other independent players in the Asia area. Even though most states of this area do not have sufficient diplomatic and military power to stand alone and usually rely on the superpower to a certain extent, each state has its own national interests and goals, and they interact with other countries to accomplish their national purpose. In

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<sup>33</sup> Sutter, Brown, and Adamson, “Balancing Acts,” 30.

<sup>34</sup> Saunders, “China’s Rising Power,” 47.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 47.

this process of pursuing national objectives, their behavior cannot always correspond with their patronal or friendly countries' interests.

This means that the effects of national behavior sometimes can be hard to understand in the context of only the U.S.-Sino relationship. Thus, policy analyses through the window of the U.S.-Sino relationship can have a limitation. In Northeast Asia, there are key players that have their own national strategies and purposes. The phenomena happening in this area cannot properly be understood, as too little research focuses on each nation's behavior, its mutual influence, and the interaction among countries. This perspective suggests that other Northeast Asian nations form a concrete intervening variable between the rebalancing policy and the stability or instability of Asia region. To evaluate U.S. policy more objectively and concretely, research is needed to understand how these countries function as realistic and analyzable intervening variables.

Additionally, studies on the rebalance insufficiently highlight the nuclear issues of the Northeast Asia area. There has been much research on nuclear issues, but it has not concentrated on the relationship between nuclear issues and the rebalancing policy. For example, Camilla T. N. Sørensen argues that a “multilateral security mechanism”—such as the Six Party Talks—was developed with the need to resolve the North Korea nuclear problem, and considering “the ongoing regional power transition following especially from the ‘Rise of China’” and the “North Korean nuclear crisis,” the importance of such a mechanism is rising in Northeast Asia.<sup>39</sup> Although Sørensen's solution to Northeast Asia's instability, which she claims is caused by power transitions and North Korea's nuclear weapons, focuses on multilateral and institutional efforts, the relationship Sørensen draws between those efforts and the Asia rebalancing policy is weak. Other scholars, such as Linton Brooks, Mira Rapp-Hooper, and John S. Park, also researched the nuclear issue of Northeast Asia; however, they focus on the problems of U.S.

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<sup>39</sup> Camilla T. N. Sørensen, “Security Multilateralism in Northeast Asia: A Lost Game or the Only Way to Stability,” *JCIR* 1, no. 1 (2013): 6–15, <http://amalthea.aub.aau.dk/index.php/jcir/article/download/214/151>.

extended deterrence, and the rebalancing policy was excluded from their debates.<sup>40</sup> But, the Asia rebalancing policy contains the idea of protecting security in Asia region with military force, so, from the perspective that Northeast Asia security is being threatened by North Korean nuclear programs and the desire of regional actors to acquire nuclear weapons and that the United States is concerned with that issue through the extended deterrence commitment, a study on the rebalancing policy must address the U.S. and regional players' behavior with respect to the nuclear issue.

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

To better evaluate the Asia rebalancing policy, this thesis tests a hypothesis. This hypothesis consists of an independent variable (IV), an intervening variable (IntV), and a dependent variable (DV). The IV is the Asia rebalancing policy, and the DV is Northeast Asia stability or instability; the IntV are the reactions of other Northeast Asian states. So, the hypothesis of this research is that the Asia rebalancing policy affects Northeast Asia instability through the Northeast Asian countries' various reactions to the U.S. rebalancing. This hypothesis is tested through empirical evidence in the thesis.

The Asia rebalancing policy, a national strategy of the United States, shapes U.S. international activities in Asia. The national strategy of a state directs its governmental behaviors. This means that most national actions are under the influence of a state's national strategy. In the case of the Asia rebalancing policy, the United States aims to share various benefits with regional countries via cooperative relationships and militarily secure circumstances. So, the debate about the rebalancing policy must include U.S. activities in diplomatic, military, and nuclear fields. More specifically, the target of this thesis is the U.S. diplomatic, military, and nuclear-related actions in Northeast Asia.

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<sup>40</sup> Linton Brooks and Mira Rapp-Hooper say that, compared to the Cold War era, extended deterrence of the current Asia-Pacific is harder because of the complexity of interests and threats existing in this area. Linton Brooks and Mira Rapp-Hooper, "Extended Deterrence, Assurance, and Reassurance in the Pacific during the Second Nuclear Age," in *Strategic Asia 2013–14: Asia in the Second Nuclear Age*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark, and Travis Tanner (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2013), 298; John S. Park points out that the problems of credibility of the U.S. extended deterrence cause South Korea's aspiration toward nuclear armament. John S. Park, "Nuclear Ambition and Tension on the Korean Peninsula," in *Strategic Asia 2013–14: Asia in the Second Nuclear Age*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark, and Travis Tanner (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2013), 198.

The reactions of each Northeast Asian state to the rebalancing policy are the concrete tools used to analyze the process of the U.S. influences on this area. With the vigorous engagements of the United States in Northeast Asia, states of the region are expressing their own responses. These reactions are the result of interaction between the U.S. policy and their own national interests or goals, so Washington could face amicable or unfriendly responses according to differences within the countries.

The most interesting aspect of these reactions is the interaction among the regional states. For instance, if the United States announces the dispatch of an aircraft carrier to Northeast Asia for a joint exercise with allies, China and North Korea will react in a way that strengthens their belligerence regarding local provocations or increases the activity of reconnaissance assets. To counter these reactions, South Korea will increase its defense alert level and prepare to cope with all possible military conflicts. Japan will also pay more attention to its area of territorial dispute to react to a possible military dispute with China or will carefully monitor any indication of a North Korean nuclear or ballistic missile test that can be seen as a military demonstration. In this manner, the response of each country to the U.S. policy influences other countries, which then affects regional security circumstances. Thus, this research traces the interconnection of Northeast Asian countries' reactions to the U.S. rebalancing policy to analyze the effects of the policy concretely and synthetically.

By testing the hypothesis and its elements, this thesis provides a chance to evaluate the effects of the rebalancing policy concretely, with the value of revealing real problems of the policy and proposing practical solutions for instability in Northeast Asia region.

## **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The Asia rebalancing policy covers a huge range of U.S. international behavior, so it is challenging to analyze all the specific events of the rebalance and all reactions. Instead, this research tries to categorize the U.S. balancing behaviors into the three big areas: diplomacy, military, and nuclear. The subjects of analysis in each area are the



representative actions, plans, or events driven by the rebalancing policy and causing reactions among Northeast Asian countries.

In the diplomatic area, the goal of the United States with regard to the rebalancing policy is to improve the range and depth of U.S. engagements. To share in the benefits of the Asia area, Washington needs to establish a cooperative relationships with the regional powers. Among these regional powers, two sorts of countries are included: traditional partners and states with which the United States seeks to revise relationships. In Northeast Asia, with its traditional and strong allies of South Korea and Japan, the U.S. goal is to develop these alliance relationships into more extensive cooperation partnerships beyond the military area. For China, considering its growing national power and regional influence, the United States recognizes a sufficient motive for cooperation. To increase contacts with these regional countries, the United States uses two kinds of diplomatic methods in Northeast Asia: multilateral organization and bilateral diplomacy. Thus, this research analyzes U.S. efforts in each field and observes the reaction of each country. For instance, for Japan to be a strong rebalance partner, improvement on the U.S.–Japan relationship is essential in the rebalancing policy. But, this U.S. bilateral effort is sometimes criticized because the U.S.–Japan relation can provide motivation for a closer Sino-Russia relationship, and this seems like a prelude to a new Cold War. In this way, the U.S. diplomatic efforts for the rebalance and the reactions of Northeast Asian countries can be analyzed causally and can help the definite evaluation of the diplomatic effects of the Asia rebalancing policy.

As for the military area, the U.S. rebalancing policy needs the support of military forces to guarantee secure environments for vigorous cooperation. So, the role of military power in the rebalance is keeping the security of Asia region. Considering that a secure situation means the absence of threat, the military force will be constructed and employed in the direction of deterring and countering threats. Northeast Asia region is one of the areas where military powers are concentrated. To deal with conventional threats, the United States is changing its force structure in Northeast Asia region and, at the same time, supporting its allies militarily. Thus, with regard to the military field, the Asia

rebalancing policy could be abstracted into two subcategories: U.S. conventional efforts and joint U.S.–allied conventional efforts.

Considering that the Asia rebalancing policy is aimed at a secure and peaceful environment in Northeast Asia region, it is reasonable to deal with the U.S. nuclear policy toward Northeast Asia in this thesis because the nuclear issue in this region is closely related to the security environment. To deal with the nuclear problems of this region, Washington provides extended deterrence capabilities to its allies and tries to denuclearize the region. In this perspective, the U.S. efforts to manage the region's nuclear issue can be studied in three subareas: the extended deterrence commitment, efforts to denuclearize North Korea, and controlling the nuclear ambitions of South Korea and Japan.

With the analysis of the reactions of regional powers in the subcategories of diplomacy, military, and nuclear, this research tries to figure out how the Northeast Asian countries interact with the U.S. approach and whether the process of interaction increases or decreases tensions. At the last stage, the thesis considers overall results synthetically and draws the conclusion from the test of the hypothesis.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. In the introduction, current security problems of Northeast Asia and regional instability are summarized, and relevant prior literature is reviewed.

The second chapter addresses the diplomatic aspect of the rebalancing policy and the reaction of the Northeast Asian states. This chapter's first section is for analyzing the U.S. diplomatic approach to the region through multilateral organizations. The second section deals with the U.S. bilateral diplomatic efforts with the two U.S. allies. Analyses of reactions of Northeast Asian countries are provided in each section.

The third chapter focuses on the military aspect of the U.S. rebalance. Its first section asks what kind of conventional efforts for regional security the U.S. has practiced in Northeast Asia and how the regional states have reacted. The second section evaluates

joint conventional efforts of the United States and its allies and their impacts on regional stability.

In the fourth chapter, this thesis focuses on the nuclear issue of Northeast Asia. The first section of this chapter examines the U.S. commitment of extended deterrence and regional nations' responses. The next section provides an analysis of how the United States tries to denuclearize the Northeast Asia area and how the regional states interact with U.S. policy. The last section discusses the U.S. efforts to control the nuclear arming of the two key allies of the region.

In the conclusion, this thesis draws on all of these analyses about the U.S. rebalancing policy to judge the merit of the primary hypothesis.

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## **II. THE DIPLOMATIC ASPECT OF THE ASIA REBALANCING POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATION ON NORTHEAST ASIA**

### **A. THE U.S. MULTILATERAL APPROACH**

Building multilateral cooperation systems is one of the main aims of the Asia rebalancing policy. The United States intends to manage regional conflicts and to establish cooperation among Asian countries through these cooperative institutions.<sup>41</sup> This is because Washington wishes to create regional order based on regulations and consent between states within international institutions. This U.S. policy does not intend to pressure China through multilateral institutions. According to Phillip C. Saunders, the United States hopes that China will play more roles in Asia together with multilateral systems, though these expanded roles of China will inevitably weaken the United States' role in Asia.<sup>42</sup> In spite of this anticipation, the direction of the U.S. policy is being maintained, and these continued efforts can be viewed as the United States seeking to build "trust and confidence" with China.<sup>43</sup> This U.S. intention can be acknowledged by the fact that the United States invited China to the 2014 Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC).<sup>44</sup> The United States is seeking to mediate disputes in Asia through cooperation, not competition, with China, and to build up peaceful circumstances to induce economic prosperity.<sup>45</sup>

These multilateral systems for security cooperation, however, serve to create conflicts because this multilateral approach from Washington is seen as an assertive policy by Beijing. China views these multilateral entities as methods to strengthen the U.S.-centered international order.<sup>46</sup> This means that the reasons that China has refused to

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<sup>41</sup> Harry Harris, "Multilateral Ties Drive America's Pacific Rebalance," *The Straits Times*, January 21, 2014, <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1490670440?accountid=12702>.

<sup>42</sup> Phillip C. Saunders, "The Rebalance to Asia: U.S.-China Relations and Regional Security," *Strategic Forum*, no. 281 (August 2013): 3, ProQuest (1427458876).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Harris, "Multilateral Ties Drive America's Pacific Rebalance."

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Saunders, "The Rebalance to Asia," 3.

enter multilateral institutions are based on a worry that China's independent decision-making rights could be damaged.<sup>47</sup> Further, China is anxious that it could lose its national interests due to the presence of the powerful U.S. influence on those institutions.<sup>48</sup> In addition, according to Gyoosang Seol, China refused to join these multilateral systems because these systems could be utilized to pressure and contain China.<sup>49</sup>

In particular, China has viewed multilateral systems as places for competing for national interests rather than cooperating. Sukhee Han argues that China is using multilateral institutions for its ambitious purposes. According to his view, China has resisted U.S. hegemony since the 1990s by utilizing multilateral diplomacy.<sup>50</sup> With the end of the Cold War, China predicted the world order would transfer to a multipolar system in which the strong powers, including the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union, would be equal in status; however, the world order still reflects the U.S. unipolar system.<sup>51</sup> The U.S.-centered unilateralism might be maintained because U.S. hard power, such as strong defense and economic capabilities, and U.S. soft power, including democratic values and a market economy, are still strong influences.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, the war on terrorism after the 9/11 attacks made the anti-terror states unite with the United States and strengthened the U.S.-centered unipolar order.<sup>53</sup>

To break the U.S. unipolar world and move to the multipolar world favorable for checking U.S. influence, China has tried utilizing multilateral entities. For instance, the reason that China entered into the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was because this

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<sup>47</sup> Sukhee Han, "*Jungguk'ui da'geughwajeonlyag, dajajuui'oegyo, geuligo dongbug Asia anbo* [Multipolarity Strategy of China, Multilateralism Diplomacy, and the Security of Northeast Asia]," *International and Regional Study* 11, no. 1 (2007): 358–60, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=2682332](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=2682332).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Gyoosang Seol, "*Dongbug'a anbo dajajuuiwa insigongdongcheui yeoghal* [Security Multilateralism in Northeast and the Role of Epistemic Communities]," *East and West Study* 20, no. 1 (2008): 13–14, <http://sloc.cafe24.com/upload/publication01>.

<sup>50</sup> Han, "Multipolarity Strategy of China," 349–50.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 352–53.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 353–54.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 355.

system had the merit of limiting U.S. influence by promoting the “ASEAN way.”<sup>54</sup> It can be inferred that China is participating in the multilateral institutions to neutralize the U.S.-centered regional order, not just to fit China to the existing systems.<sup>55</sup> This means that China is using the multilateral institutions of the region to restrain the unipolar system of the United States, believing that establishing the multipolar order by power balancing is realistically impossible.<sup>56</sup>

Sukhee Han states that China has improved its international position and promoted China-centered international systems since the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>57</sup> Specifically, it has used the Six Party Talks to improve its diplomatic leverage within Northeast Asia.<sup>58</sup> China negatively perceives that the leverage of other countries except China increases in the Korean peninsula, so China opposes the occurrence of instability that would justify interventions in adjacent states.<sup>59</sup> To support this stance, China needs a method to manage unstable situations arising in North Korea and to control neighboring countries’ interference, and the Six Party Talks are suitable for this role.<sup>60</sup> Also, the point that China has a superior position in inducing North Korea to the negotiating table and giving influence to North Korea’s regime is another reason that China prefers the Six Party Talks.<sup>61</sup> For China, multilateral institutions have a value as a means to check the unipolar clout of the United States and to protect China’s national interests.

Because China perceives multilateral systems for security cooperation as methods to procure national interests, peaceful mediation of conflicts through security cooperation entities becomes difficult, and the U.S. intention to rebalance Asia through the institutions gets hindered. For example, according to a study by Gudrun Wacker, China

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<sup>54</sup> Han, “Multipolarity Strategy of China,” 360–61.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 363–64.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 364.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 365.

had briskly joined the regional security cooperation institutions between the early 1990s and the mid-2000s; however, China does not depend on these institutions in the case of territorial disputes.<sup>62</sup> China tries to solve these disputes within bilateral relations, and because of this tendency, Japan becomes more dependent on the support of powerful countries such as the United States.<sup>63</sup> For Michael Spangler, China seems to continue to resist U.S.-led efforts to settle the territorial disputes through international institutions.<sup>64</sup> According to his study, China will not submit to the authority of regional institutions existing in Asia, and the Chinese government tends to solve conflicts related to China through bilateral dialogue.<sup>65</sup> Saunders also argues that China is refusing to deal with the issues of sensitive conflicts in places for security cooperation like ARF, and that China uses them instead to make aggressive statements against neighboring countries, including the United States.<sup>66</sup>

Due to China's uncooperative posture in solving conflicts through multilateral systems, states experiencing troubles with China come to select more offensive tones in policies related to China. According to Saunders, because of this Chinese attitude, adjacent states seek to get anti-Chinese security support by establishing relationships with the United States, and these requests provide a motivation for the U.S. rebalancing; circularly, the U.S. approach makes China more focused on bilateral solutions to deny the increasing U.S. influence, and this Chinese reaction induces additional security demands from the pro-American neighbors.<sup>67</sup>

For instance, Japan has suffered from a maritime dispute with China since the 1990s, and China has relied on bilateral methods such as economic sanctions or diplomatic engagements to achieve its demands. With the rise of tension levels and the

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<sup>62</sup> Gudrun Wacker, *Security Cooperation in East Asia: Structures, Trends and Limitations* (SWP Research Paper 2015/RP 04), trans. David Barnes, (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2015, [http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research\\_papers/2015\\_RP04\\_wkr.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2015_RP04_wkr.pdf)).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Spangler, "Rebalancing the Rebalance," 18.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Saunders, "The Rebalance to Asia," 3–4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 4–5.



growth of China's military power, Japan began to recognize the necessity of strengthening security cooperation with the United States to offset the power asymmetry between Japan and China.<sup>68</sup> To promote a more cooperative relationship, in early 2012 Japan joined command post exercises with U.S. forces that assumed Chinese intervention on Japanese territory, and these kinds of joint exercises between U.S. forces in Japan and Japanese Self Defense Forces (JSDF) have since been held several times.<sup>69</sup> Also, after nationalizing the Senkaku Islands in September 2012, there was an official announcement from the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) that the Senkaku Islands were covered under the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty.<sup>70</sup>

In reaction to this U.S. security support, China tried to thwart U.S. involvement and limit the U.S. military's role in this maritime issue by officially blaming U.S. intervention for the rising tensions between China and Japan. China also fortified maritime patrols and air reconnaissance around the islands to pressure Japan. China's aggressive actions fueled Japan's security concerns, so Japan consequently came to seek more security support from the United States by revising the U.S.–Japan Defense Guideline and strengthening the U.S. extended deterrence commitment. Within this vicious circle, anti-Chinese attitudes in China's adjacent states deepen, and their policies toward China become more offensive. Thus, the reactions of states like Japan further undermine U.S. desires to promote security multilateralism.

Similar to this, Wecker insists that, due to the security vacuum that remains despite multilateral institutions for security guarantees, bilateral security cooperation among Asian countries is rising, and these types of cooperation are occurring at a lower

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<sup>68</sup> Tae-sung Kim, “*Mi,ildongmaeng ganghwa yoin bunseog* [Analyzing the Causes of Enhancement for U.S.-Japan Alliance],” *Military Forum* 82 (2015): 122, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3341799](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3341799).

<sup>69</sup> Young-jun Park, “*Dong Asia haeyanganbo'ui hyeonhwanggwa dajagan haeyanghyeoblyeogbang'an* [The Current State of East Asian Maritime Security and the Plan for Multilateral Maritime Cooperation],” *Jpi Policy Forum* 102 (2012): 15, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3087931](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3087931).

<sup>70</sup> Seong-Ho, Jang, “*Senkaku/Diaoyudao bunjaeng'eseo Junggug'ui bunjaeng daeeunghangsiggwa ham'ui* [The Mode of China to Cope with the Dispute of Senkaku/Diaoyudao and the Implication],” *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 73 (2014): 13, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3284945](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3284945).

level than alliance relationships.<sup>71</sup> This security cooperation is primarily focused on strengthening security without stimulating negative reactions from China.

Of course, because the United States is rebalancing Asia not for the purpose of confronting China but controlling the outbreak of armed conflicts in the region and pursuing economic prosperity, Washington will continue trying to build a cooperative relationship with Beijing; however, it is evident that China's aggressive attitude is an element that makes the U.S. rebalancing of Asia more complex.<sup>72</sup> China continues to act as an obstacle to the establishment of collective security cooperation entities in Asia region while taking two contradictory attitudes.<sup>73</sup> This means China will neither challenge publicly and directly the regional order that the United States has established through multilateral institutions, nor cooperate positively with these systems.<sup>74</sup>

## **B. BILATERAL APPROACH**

As a part of the Asia rebalancing policy, the fortification of relationships between the United States and key allies in Northeast Asia is progressing, and alliances could inspire aggressive responses by Northeast Asian countries, regardless of the U.S. intention. This means the security guarantee to the allied countries could cause conflicts with China. For example, according to the opinions of Swaine et al., Japan could respond to China more belligerently, expecting the United States to support it, based on the security commitment, if a maritime territorial dispute happened between China and Japan.<sup>75</sup> These allied countries' behaviors contribute to regional instability by causing a vicious cycle: those behaviors foment regional tensions by irritating China, and the tensions induce a more powerful security commitment from the United States.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Wacker, *Security Cooperation in East Asia*, 20.

<sup>72</sup> Saunders, "The Rebalance to Asia," 5.

<sup>73</sup> Michael D. Swaine et al., *Conflict and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: a Strategic Net Assessment* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015), 150, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/net\\_assessment\\_2.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/net_assessment_2.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 149–50.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

In a similar perspective, Saunders points out that China argues that the U.S. allies have maintained a tough military policy against China due to the Asia rebalancing policy.<sup>77</sup> This means that China perceives that the states receiving security support from the United States are encroaching on Chinese sovereignty, while Chinese foreign policy has not been changed to an aggressive one.<sup>78</sup> China tries to cooperate with the United States through the “new model of great power relations” and seeks to solve the maritime dispute against U.S. allied countries through the bilateral relationship with the state directly involved.<sup>79</sup> The United States also continuously has advocated the arbitration of disputes based on the international regulations and laws while clarifying that the Senkaku Islands are covered by the U.S.–Japan alliance.<sup>80</sup> Saunders worries that Japan, in contrast to the unaggressive United States, is setting up its policy of maritime disputes not to negotiate and concede, but to accept military collisions.<sup>81</sup> As the military tension caused by the aggressive posture is continued, the possibility of Japan’s breakaway from the nonproliferation regimes and the subsequent rupture of the alliance could increase.<sup>82</sup>

In addition, the strengthening of the alliance system could lead to unnecessary confrontation in Northeast Asia region. According to In Ho Lee, consolidation of the U.S.–Japan alliance based on the Asia rebalancing policy, named “the new U.S.–Japan honeymoon,” is motivating the type of U.S.-China competition and the Sino-Russian cooperation that cause regional instability of Northeast Asia.<sup>83</sup> In the context of reinforcing the U.S.–Japan alliance, the change in the legal interpretation of Japan’s collective self-defense rights was primarily implemented, and this change was welcomed

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<sup>77</sup> Saunders, “The Rebalance to Asia,” 10.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> In Ho Lee, “*Abejeongbuui ugyeonghwawa Miildongmaeng ganghwa’ga Hanbando anbojeongse’e michineun yeonghyang* [Abe Administration’s Right-wing Policies and Strengthening the U.S.-Japan Alliance and Their Impact on the Security Situation in the Korean Peninsula],” *East Asia Study* 69 (2015): 95, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3351198](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3351198).

by U.S. decision-makers, including President Obama.<sup>84</sup> Based on this changed interpretation, Japan decided that it could support logistical operations in wars carried out by the United States.<sup>85</sup> Along with this decision, Japan set the foundation for expanding its sphere of military activities from the areas around Japan to the whole world by revising the U.S.–Japan defense cooperation guidelines.<sup>86</sup> This means that strengthening the U.S.–Japan alliance is interlocked with the expansion of Japan’s military roles and the establishment of strong military power that Japan’s Prime Minister Abe pursues. This situation can be evaluated as an outcome of the connection between Japan’s ambition to enlarge national leverage through a military buildup and the United States’ interest in continuing its rebalancing to induce a reduction in military power.<sup>87</sup> This strengthening is a way for Japan to not only prepare for a response to the territorial disputes against China, but also to become a “normal country” able to project its armed forces without any restriction.<sup>88</sup>

On the fortification of the U.S.–Japan alliance, China fears that this close defense tie harms China’s national interests.<sup>89</sup> China consistently has emphasized that the U.S.–Japan relationship must be limited to cooperative issues between both countries and should not be extended to interfere in other states.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, China has formed a close relationship with Russia to counteract the U.S.–Japan security cooperation.<sup>91</sup> The Sino–Russia tie is reacting to a perceived U.S.-centered unipolar order and consolidation of the U.S.–Japan alliance, and the tie tends to be strong qualitatively and quantitatively as the U.S.–Japan alliance becomes powerful along with the rebalancing policy.<sup>92</sup> The mutual benefits of the Sino–Russia relation are that China can focus on strategic reactions

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<sup>84</sup> Lee, “Abe Administration’s Right-Wing Policies,” 88.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 89–90.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 93, 95.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 96–97.

against the United States while getting a stable borderline situation and that Russia can prosecute its Siberia and Far East development strategy smoothly.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, solidification between Washington and Tokyo could be regarded as a threatening element by Beijing, but also the cause of regional instability through aggravation of the confrontation between the U.S.–Japan and Sino–Russia alliances.<sup>94</sup>

Also, the close relationship between the United States and Japan can lead to fortifying the China–North Korea relationship. According to Jae-Kwan Kim, the reason that China sustains its relationship with North Korea is to deter the United States, which is rebalancing to Asia.<sup>95</sup> The mutual cooperation treaty between China and North Korea includes the article of automatic intervention of China in the event of war, and based on this article, the Sino–Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) relationship can be considered close to an alliance.<sup>96</sup> Although their closeness is sometimes doubted due to the fact that China does not provide any arms to North Korea in peacetime (worrying that this provision can be utilized as a basis by the United States to supply weapons to Taiwan), China would enter the Korean peninsula based on the mutual cooperation treaty in a time of emergency, and China sees this treaty as a method for deterring U.S. military activities.<sup>97</sup> Following this recognition, it appears that China maintains the relationship with North Korea in order to prevent military action under the U.S.–Japan alliance that presumes North Korea as a threat officially.

It is also worthwhile to consider that the strengthened U.S.–Japan relationship consequentially raises the security anxieties of South Korea. The United States is supporting the enlargement of the Japan’s self-defense rights in accordance with the rebalancing policy, and in this background, Japan finished modifying the interpretation of

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<sup>93</sup> Jae-Kwan Kim, “*21segi Miguk’ui jaegyunhyeong jeonlyaggwa bug,jung,leo samgagggwangye’e daehan yeonghyang gochal* [A Review on America’s Rebalancing Strategy and Its Impact on Trilateral Relationship between China, Russia, and North Korea in the 21st Century],” *Northeast Asia Study* 28, no. 2 (2013): 34, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3195899](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3195899).

<sup>94</sup> Lee, “Abe Administration’s Right-wing Policies,” 97–99.

<sup>95</sup> Kim, “A Review on America’s Rebalancing Strategy,” 28.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–28.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

its constitution and laws on September 19, 2015, in order to exercise its extended self-defense rights.<sup>98</sup> Due to this extension of JSDF activities, South Korea worries that the JSDF will enter South Korean territory if a crisis happened on the Korean peninsula.<sup>99</sup> Japan, of course, officially expresses that any deployments of the JSDF, including to the Korean peninsula, need the agreements of the involved countries.<sup>100</sup> Considering that wartime operational control is not in the hands of the South Korean military, however, its government questions how effectively the regime can control Japan's intervention on the Korean peninsula.<sup>101</sup> Also, a Japanese official's statement that Japan would probably attack North Korea directly in the case of a North Korean launch of nuclear or conventional missiles against the U.S. mainland is provoking the South Korean public.<sup>102</sup> Acknowledging this apprehensive public opinion, the Republic of Korea defense minister publically announced that South Korea can reject the JSDF's employment to the Korean peninsula in spite of a U.S. request; however, it is not clear whether or not the U.S. government has consented to this kind of authority.<sup>103</sup>

In addition to this, the expansion of the JSDF's role can affect the military buildup of South Korea. Considering that Japan's regime is showing a conservative shift without clear self-reflection on its history of aggression, South Korea is worried that Japan's improved military power can be used in an aggressive way again.<sup>104</sup> Thus, Japan's military advancement is a kind of potential threat that South Korea should

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<sup>98</sup> Youngtae Jeong, "*Ilbon jibdanjawigwonbeoban choejongggwanmun tonggwa...jeonjaeng ganeunghan gukgalo* [Final Passage of the Bill on Japan's Collective Self Defense Rights, Toward a State Possible to Participate Wars]," *SBS News*, September 19, 2015, [http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news\\_id=N1003178940&plink=SEARCH&cooper=SBSNEWSSEARCH](http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1003178940&plink=SEARCH&cooper=SBSNEWSSEARCH).

<sup>99</sup> "*Ilbon, Hanbando yusasi Jawidae jinchul ganeungseong yeoleossda* [Japan, Opening the Possibility to Enter into Korean Peninsula in Case of Emergency]," *SBS News*, September 20, 2015, [http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news\\_id=N1003180138&plink=SEARCH&cooper=SBSNEWSSEARCH](http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1003180138&plink=SEARCH&cooper=SBSNEWSSEARCH).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Taehoon Kim, "*Migun'i yocheonghaedo il Jawidae pabyeong geojeol ganeung* [South Korea, Possible to Reject the Dispatch of Japanese Self Defense Forces Albeit the U.S. Request]" *SBS News*, September 21, 2015, [http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news\\_id=N1003182188&plink=SEARCH&cooper=SBSNEWSSEARCH](http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1003182188&plink=SEARCH&cooper=SBSNEWSSEARCH).

<sup>104</sup> Lee, "Abe Administration's Right-Wing Policies," 102.

answer. On October 1, 2015, Japan set up the defense equipment agency responsible for armaments research, development, import, and export, and this agency was empowered to execute the defense budget of sixteen billion dollars, which was about forty percent of Japan's total defense spending; this means that Japan is on its way to being a powerful military nation.<sup>105</sup> Mixed with the expansion of its self-defense rights, the rise of Japan's military can be an element that stimulates South Korea to develop its own military.

The close U.S.–Japan tie can create regional instability as the relationship pressures South Korea to confront China. With the strengthening of the U.S.–Japan alliance and the expansion of Japan's military activity areas, Japan began joint military exercises with the countries that are in conflict with China on the South China Sea. For instance, the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Forces and the Philippine Navy had a joint exercise in May 2015, and after this exercise, the Philippine president visited Japan to discuss how to restrain Chinese advances into the sea.<sup>106</sup> This vigorousness of Japan's anti-Chinese activities based on the strong U.S.–Japan alliance can be a factor that pushes South Korea to become offensive toward China, and this offensiveness can make regional tensions in Northeast Asia worse. In practice, on June 3, 2015, in a U.S.–Republic of Korea (ROK) strategic dialogue seminar, Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel encouraged South Korea to participate in the anti-China opposition in the South China Sea, giving rise to predictions that U.S. pressure on South Korea had begun.<sup>107</sup>

In the case of the U.S.–ROK alliance, the strengthening of the alliance is progressing in the context of the rebalancing policy, and the South Korean regime also

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<sup>105</sup> Suchan Park, "*Ilbon bangwijangbicheong chulbeom...gunsadaegughwa sinhotan doena* [The Launch of Japanese Defense Equipment Agency, a Signal Toward a Powerful Military State?]" *The Segye Daily News*, October 4, 2015, <http://www.segye.com/content/html/2015/10/04/20151004000627.html?OutUrl=naver>.

<sup>106</sup> Uigil Jung, "*Ilbon, yeongyugwon bunjaeng namjunggughaeseo the Philippine-Vietnam gwa itdan yeonhab hunlyeon* [Japan's Consecutive Joint Exercises with the Philippine and Vietnam in the South China Sea, the Area of Territorial Disputes]," *The Hankyoreh News*, May 10, 2015, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/international/asiapacific/690571.html>.

<sup>107</sup> "*Miguk Namjunggughae bunjaeng'e Han'guk dongcham abbag?...Russell baleon pajang yesang* [The U.S. Pressure for South Korea to Participate in Disputes of the South China Sea? The Impact of Russell's Comment]," *SBS News*, June 4, 2015, [http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news\\_id=N1003008542&plink=SEARCH&cooper=SBSNEWSSEARCH](http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1003008542&plink=SEARCH&cooper=SBSNEWSSEARCH).

welcomes this fortified relationship.<sup>108</sup> But China's response is somewhat different. China worries that the consolidation of the relationship becomes the means to resist or contain China beyond North Korea, so the Chinese government wishes that South Korea would neglect or defect from its alliance.<sup>109</sup>

But China's worries and desires are both difficult to realize. First of all, the ROK–China relationship is less tense than Sino–Japan relations not only because there is not any sensitive element such as a maritime dispute, but also because China maintains the same attitude with South Korea on North Korea's provocations while publicly criticizing Pyongyang's leadership.<sup>110</sup> Also, considering the significance of ROK–China economic ties, this amicable relationship is expected to last for a while.<sup>111</sup> So, South Korea is less motivated to adopt an anti-Chinese policy than Japan. At the same time, it is unrealistic that the U.S.–ROK relationship would be spoiled as China desires because South Korea would not sacrifice the alliance to become closer to China.<sup>112</sup> Thus, although the fortified relationship between the United States and South Korea could cause the worried response of China, it can be anticipated that this improved relationship would not be linked to the instability of Northeast Asia.

### C. CONCLUSION

In the diplomatic aspect of the Asia rebalancing policy, the U.S. approach of employing multilateral institutions for security cooperation could cause regional instability because it not only constructs confrontational postures within the institutions that China regards as a threat to Chinese security interests, but also intensifies the security dependency of U.S.-allied countries in Northeast Asia. Also, the bilateral approach, such as fortifying the alliance relationship with Japan, can lead to aggressive

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<sup>108</sup> Scott Synder, "The U.S.-ROK Alliance and the U.S. Rebalance to Asia," in *Strategic Asia 2014–15: U.S. Alliance and Partnerships at the Center of Global Power*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark, and Greg Chaffin (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2014), 79.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Swaine et al., *Conflict and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region*, 157.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>112</sup> Synder, "The U.S.-ROK Alliance and the U.S. Rebalance to Asia," 79.



foreign policies and unnecessary military buildups in the region as the strengthened relationship stimulates China's and South Korea's security anxieties.

To counter this analysis, it is worthwhile to pay attention to the U.S. role within multilateral institutions for security cooperation. The United States utilizes multilateral systems for protecting the allied countries' security interests and constructing peaceful relations in Northeast Asia. If any multilateral systems are invigorated in this region without U.S. involvement, this vitalization could result in a China-centered regional order and intervention in its neighboring countries' security interests. For example, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is thought to represent China's interests enough to be recognized as an anti-U.S. defense cooperation entity beyond the concept of regional security cooperation. So, if the cooperation in Northeast Asia progresses within the U.S.-vetoed systems while China does not have the region's trust as a responsible arbitrator, this cooperation can be the factor causing diplomatic conflicts with the United States and damaging regional security. Thus, although some tensions exist between Washington and Beijing, the U.S. presence in multilateral institutions for the rebalancing policy can be regarded as a factor raising the regional stability of Northeast Asia.

The strengthening of U.S. relationships with allied states according to the rebalancing policy also contributes to the stability of Northeast Asia from the perspective that the fortification gives security guarantees and removes national defense anxiety. Of course, South Korea and Japan can adopt an aggressive anti-China posture based on the confidence of their close alliance relationships, and this posture can increase the possibility of armed conflicts. But, considering the negative military responses that can emerge with the weakening of the allied relationships, such as arms races and nuclear arming, it can be concluded that the revitalization of an alliance relationship has more benefits than disadvantages to regional stability.

But, the expansion of each allied country's role beyond the close alliance relationship should be reconsidered. Japan's case is particularly problematic. Japan is being seen as a challenge to national security in South Korea and China as it changes the interpretation of its self-defense rights and extends its military role with the U.S. rebalancing policy. This perception can lead to the rise of mistrust among Northeast

Asian countries and intensification of regional conflicts. Thus, the enlargement of Japan's military activity can be regarded as a harmful side effect of the rebalancing policy, and this should be monitored carefully.

### III. THE MILITARY ASPECT OF THE ASIA REBALANCING POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON NORTHEAST ASIA

The U.S. *National Security Strategy* states that the military purpose of the U.S. rebalancing policy is to foster a peaceful environment in Asia region in order to “to enhance stability and security, facilitate trade and commerce through an open and transparent system, and ensure respect for universal rights and freedoms.”<sup>113</sup> So, the United States will use its military forces to secure the area, allowing vigorous trade that can maximize the economic potential of Asia. To manage its military power, the U.S. government tries to diversify the force deployment and its utilization by forming security ties with various countries.<sup>114</sup> Also, the White House states that it will cope with common threats through international institutions such as ASEAN or the East Asia Summit (EAS).<sup>115</sup>

In the *National Security Strategy*, the United States also clarifies that the U.S. military will compete with but not confront China.<sup>116</sup> This means that the United States will manage the factors that can develop into armed conflicts by persuading China to act within the framework of international regulations.<sup>117</sup> In addition, concerning China’s military modernization, the document says that the U.S. government will continue to pay attention to China’s military rise while seeking methods to avoid misunderstandings of each other’s military powers.<sup>118</sup>

But, it seems that this peaceful intention of the U.S. military movements does not always produce moderate reactions in the Northeast Asian countries. According to Phillip C. Saunders, Washington and Beijing officially state that their stances are not hostile to

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<sup>113</sup> Office of the President of the United States, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: Office of the President of the United States, February 2015), 24, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015\\_national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

each other.<sup>119</sup> The United States argues that there is no intention of containing China, and China also denies its ambition to be a hegemonic power by defeating the United States.<sup>120</sup> But, what is important is that both states disbelieve each other's official attitude due to the lack of "strategic trust" between them.<sup>121</sup> The United States regards China's Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities as threats and sees China's military modernization to be mainly targeting the range of action of U.S. forces.<sup>122</sup> So, the mistrust and competition between the United States and China is obvious in Northeast Asia region.<sup>123</sup>

Hence, the first unstable factor of the rebalancing policy from a military aspect lies in the relationship between Washington and Beijing. The next section of this chapter discusses that factor. The following section then focuses on how other countries' reactions to U.S.-China competition functions as an "intervening variable" further contributing to regional instability.

#### **A. AIR-SEA BATTLE VS. ANTI-ACCESS/AREA-DENIAL**

From the military perspective, U.S.-China tension over the rebalancing policy is usually studied within the framework of confrontation between the Air-Sea Battle (ASB) strategy of the United States and the A2/AD strategy of China. The concept of ASB, of course, is not targeting China concretely; however, the operational concept of ASB is mostly related to China's military capabilities.<sup>124</sup> Sung-kurl Kim agrees with this relationship between ASB and A2/AD, considering that the United States cited China as a threat in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR).<sup>125</sup> This was based on the Chinese military's growth both in terms of number and technological capabilities for A2/

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<sup>119</sup> Saunders, "The Rebalance to Asia," 13.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Sung-kurl Kim, "*Miguk'ui dong Asia gonghaejeontu(ASB) gochal* [Understanding on the America's Air-Sea Battle (ASB) in East Asia Region]," *Military Forum* 73 (2013): 101, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3134469](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3134469).

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 102

AD.<sup>126</sup> In conflicts with the United States, China can aspire to reduce U.S. intelligence power by destroying U.S. satellites and sensors with its anti-satellite weapons or electronic warfare means.<sup>127</sup> This means that the U.S. military could lose the network and communication capability that it has embedded and relies on in most battlefields.<sup>128</sup> Also, China's long-range guided missile system can threaten the forward-deployed Navy or Air Force bases and the safety of U.S. aircraft carriers, so U.S. forces can face unfavorable conditions when starting military operations.<sup>129</sup>

Jae-Kwan Kim sees that the U.S. rebalancing policy is broadly perceived as a containment policy by the Chinese government; so, following the viewpoint of realism, China reacts to this policy through the A2/AD strategy accompanied by Chinese military modernization.<sup>130</sup> To counter China's A2/AD strategy, the United States tries to respond with the ASB concept, which focuses on neutralizing China's missile attacks while maintaining the commanding lead of intelligence capability.<sup>131</sup> Thus, the U.S. strategy intends to guarantee the U.S. ability to intervene while protecting U.S. core interests against the Chinese denial strategy.<sup>132</sup>

In line with Jae-Kwan Kim, Seongjong Song asserts that the United States seeks to counter China's strategy by introducing the ASB concept. With the development of the A2/AD ability, China is practicing a strategy to restrain the enemy's actions within the sea line China has established.<sup>133</sup> Under the assumption that the U.S. mainland and the allies' territory could be attacked in an unexpected area and time and that these attacks would be conducted through various platforms of forces, the United States develops the

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<sup>126</sup> Kim, "Understanding on the America's Air-Sea Battle," 102.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Kim, "A Review on America's Rebalancing Strategy," 22.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Seongjong Song, "*Obama haengjeongbuui a,tae jae'gyunhyeong jeonlyag "junggan" pyeongga* ['Interim' Assessment of Asia-Pacific Pivot/Rebalancing Strategy of the Obama Administration]," *National Defense Study* 57, no. 4 (2014): 16, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3294899](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3294899).

operational concept of ASB to ensure U.S. access to Asia even in the presence of threats.<sup>134</sup> To fulfill ASB capabilities, a powerfully united network is essential so that the existing forces can operate under improved interconnectedness to guarantee the effectiveness of each unit.<sup>135</sup>

In this way, the ASB strategy is seen as a China-countering method by other Asian countries, and this strategy can be realized by the redeployment of U.S. advanced weapons to Asia. Sung-kurl Kim posits that the United States is actively raising the forces necessary for ASB, and that this military growth is closely related to “the Asia rebalancing policy, reaction to A2/AD strategy, and realization of ASB.”<sup>136</sup> According to his analysis, the U.S. DOD is purchasing additional weapons (albeit against the pressure of budget reductions); these weapons are as follows:<sup>137</sup>

- Aegis destroyers for the Navy
- Littoral combat ships
- P-8A long-range maritime patrol aircraft and improved C-5 Galaxy
- Ship-to-air and ship-to-surface missiles for the Navy
- Air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles for the Navy and Air Force
- Air Force KC-46A tanker
- WIN-T combat intelligence system
- Patriot missiles for Missile Defense

These weapon systems have a direct connection to the practice of ASB, and the U.S. DOD is primarily deploying them to the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>138</sup> This intent of the Pentagon was clearly expressed in the press interview that U.S. Secretary of Defense Carter had while visiting South Korea in April 2015. He announced that new U.S.

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<sup>134</sup> Song, “‘Interim’ Assessment of Asia-Pacific Pivot/Rebalancing Strategy,” 16–18.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>136</sup> Kim, “Understanding on the America’s Air-Sea Battle,” 103.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 104–5.

weapon systems, including stealth fighters and destroyers, electronic warfare systems, and cyber warfare capability, will be dispatched in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>139</sup>

Also, the DOD is considering how Zumwalt-class destroyers can support the ASB concept. The Chinese model weapons for A2 are DF-21D and submarines; without countermeasures against those weapons, the warfighting capabilities of the U.S. carrier strike groups inevitably become limited.<sup>140</sup> Zumwalt-class destroyers have a stealth ability, thus they can approach the Chinese coast while neutralizing A2 capability; also, by equipping the powerful anti-ship and anti-air weapons and land attacking methods, the destroyers are considered to be appropriate arms for ASB.<sup>141</sup> The U.S. government already stated in October 2013 that these Zumwalt-class destroyers were going to be deployed to the Pacific area; additionally, in June 2015, the United States announced through the booklet “Strategic Digest 2015” that high tech weaponry, including Zumwalt-class destroyers, would operate in the region near South Korea.<sup>142</sup>

In addition to the ASB, there has also been a slight change in the U.S. force deployment. Seongjong Song—based on his argument that the Asia rebalancing policy regards China as the competitor of the United States—observes that the U.S. government is redistributing U.S. forces in tandem with the regional partners of Asia except China in order to support the rebalancing policy.<sup>143</sup> Specifically, based on the idea of “forward deployment,” the United States is sending additional ships, including destroyers, aircraft carriers, and nuclear submarines. With these forces, Washington intends to guarantee its

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<sup>139</sup> Suchan Park, “*Carter mi gugbang jung gyeonjejeonlyag, Hanbando jeongse chulleong* [China Containment Strategy of Carter, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Is Making South Korea’s Security Situation Sway],” *The Segye Daily News*, April 10, 2015, <http://www.segye.com/content/html/2015/04/10/20150410002678.html>.

<sup>140</sup> Kim, “Understanding on the America’s Air-Sea Battle,” 106.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Wonbae Kim, “*Hangmo Killer mi Stealth guchugham, Taepyeongyang’e ttuiunda* [The U.S. Stealth Destroyer with Anti-Aircraft Carrier Capability Will Be Launched to Pacific Ocean],” *YTN*, October 22, 2013, [http://www.ytn.co.kr/\\_ln/0104\\_201310220803488967](http://www.ytn.co.kr/_ln/0104_201310220803488967); Taehoon Kim, “*Mi, EA-18 jeonjajeon’gi, Stealth guchugham Han’guk baechigyehoe* [The U.S. Plan to Deploy EA-18 Electronic Warfare Fighters and Stealth Destroyers to South Korea],” *SBS News*, June 2, 2015, [http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news\\_id=N1003005370](http://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1003005370).

<sup>143</sup> Song, “‘Interim’ Assessment of Asia-Pacific Pivot/Rebalancing Strategy,” 12.

security support to its allies and secure the U.S. lead in disputes.<sup>144</sup> The military bases that are provided from South Korea and Japan are expected to minimize the influence of future sequestration.<sup>145</sup> In addition, for the Navy's "offshore maritime role," parts of the naval forces will move to the Southwest Pacific. With this force deployment, the United States aims to utilize its forces flexibly and offset political opposition to overseas dispatch of its armed forces.<sup>146</sup>

This U.S. military reinforcement in Asia region seems to confront China's military rise, and this confrontation intensifies the security dilemma between Washington and Beijing and consequently causes regional instability.<sup>147</sup> This can be noticed by looking at China's military advancement relative to the capability of the U.S. forces and the credibility of its security commitment. In naval power, following the launch of its first aircraft carrier in 2012, China announced its plan for a new aircraft carrier in 2013 and has concentrated on the development of the carrier.<sup>148</sup> At the same time, China is focusing on the improved quality and quantity of its naval forces with the construction of nuclear-powered submarines, submarines capable of launching ballistic missiles, and improved battle ships with guided missiles.<sup>149</sup> As for air power, China's stealth fighters, such as Jen-20 and Jen-31, are in the final process of development, and China is working on a new type of air-to-air missile, named PL-15, which is able to become a critical threat to U.S. air power.<sup>150</sup> U.S. Air Force Combat Commander Herbert Carlisle expressed

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<sup>144</sup> Song, "'Interim' Assessment of Asia-Pacific Pivot/Rebalancing Strategy," 12–14.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>147</sup> Kim, "A Review on America's Rebalancing Strategy," 23–25.

<sup>148</sup> Sam Perlo-Freeman and Carina Solmirano, "Military Spending and Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2014: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 191.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Jaesung Hong, "*Jung, PL-15 gongdaegong misail siheombalsa seonggong...mi F-35 wihyeob* [China, Succeeding in the Test Launch of PL-15 Air-to-Air Missile...Threat to the U.S. F-35]," *Yonhapnews*, September 25, 2015, <http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2015/09/25/0200000000AKR20150925089800083.HTML?from=search>.



concerns that the PL-15 missile would be a serious threat to the safety of U.S. Air Force assets such as fighters and bombers.<sup>151</sup>

The military parade that China showed as a part of the World War II Victory Day ceremony in September 2015 also reflects military competition with the United States. During this parade, China showed off its strategic assets, such as the DF-21D missile (known as an aircraft carrier killer), the DF-26 missile with the capability to attack the U.S. strategic base on Guam (called the Guam killer), the DF-31A missile capable of reaching the U.S. mainland, and the Hong-6K strategic bomber that can reach Guam and Hawaii.<sup>152</sup> In this manner, China has continued its efforts to deny the approach of U.S. military power, and this trend of China's weapon development might be maintained for many years to come.

## **B. JAPAN'S MILITARY RISE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ASIA REBALANCING POLICY**

Other than a military power competition stemming from China's reaction to the U.S. rebalancing by the expansion of armaments, current Northeast Asia regional arms races are affected by other factors related to the Asia rebalancing policy. These problems are usually created by other states' concerns over whether the United States will actually use its military power to support the rebalancing policy in practice.

Seongjong Song points out the correlation between skepticism of the effectiveness of the rebalancing policy and arms races in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>153</sup> The doubts about the U.S. policy come from these events: the U.S. avoidance of military intervention on non-core issues such as the Ukraine crisis, the prospect that China's military spending will overtake the U.S. defense expenditure for the Asia-Pacific region within twenty years, the negative outlook existing among the U.S. defense professionals on the rebalancing policy with reference to the reduction of the U.S. defense budget, and the

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<sup>151</sup> Hong, "China, Succeeding in the Test Launch of PL-15 Air-to-Air Missile."

<sup>152</sup> "*Hangmo Killger deung cheomdanmugi daegeo dongwon...jeonseggyee gunsagulgi gwasi* [Mobilizing Several Advanced Weapons Including 'Aircraft Carrier Killer' and Displaying China's Military Rise]," *The Financial News*, September 3, 2015, <http://www.fnnews.com/news/201509031719547503>.

<sup>153</sup> Song, "'Interim' Assessment of Asia-Pacific Pivot/Rebalancing Strategy," 27.

neo-isolationism rising among U.S. politicians and the public.<sup>154</sup> He worries that the weakening credibility of U.S. policy can stimulate the feeling of insecurity in Asian countries and, going further, could create a security dilemma in this region.<sup>155</sup> This concern is based on the analysis that some Asian states would like to devise a means of military strengthening and the establishment of a more offensive alliance to counter the military development of their neighboring countries.<sup>156</sup> The worry is gradually becoming true considering that Asia region's defense expenditures have exceeded Europe's since 2012, driven by the efforts of specific countries to develop or introduce the newest weapons.<sup>157</sup> Like this, it can be argued that, despite U.S. efforts at rebalancing, the doubt of Asia-Pacific countries about U.S. resources and commitment to the rebalancing policy is promoting their military competition.<sup>158</sup>

A study by Byunggoo Lee shows the influence of reducing the U.S. defense budget. According to his analysis on the implementation of sequestration, the U.S. Army will reduce its number of active military roughly from 500,000 to 400,000, and the U.S. weapon purchasing plan has to be modified by abandoning some new purchases and curtailing upgrades of currently possessed weaponry.<sup>159</sup> The U.S. Navy could reduce the number of carrier strike groups from eleven to ten, will inevitably delay the development or purchasing of battle ships, and will reconsider the scale of its introduction of new aircraft such as the F-35C and P-8A.<sup>160</sup> The U.S. Air Force may retire tankers and other old aircraft and downsize the plan for procuring Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) such as the Global Hawk and Predator.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Song, "'Interim' Assessment of Asia-Pacific Pivot/Rebalancing Strategy," 24–34.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Byunggoo Lee, "*Miguk'ui gugbangbi gamchug chusewa gunsalyeog jaejojeong: bunseog mich jeonlyagjeog hamui* [The Changing Patterns of U.S. Defense Spending and the Adjustment of Force Structure: An Analysis and Strategic Implications]," *National Defense Policy Study* 30, no. 2 (2014): 29–31, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3261785](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3261785).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 32–34.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 34–35.

This decrease of U.S. military power can cause China to undervalue the U.S. capability of executing its security commitments to its Northeast Asia allies, and based on this judgment, “China may possibly accelerate its coercive diplomatic movement against adjacent countries.”<sup>162</sup> In addition, facing a shortage of military resources for the rebalancing, the United States began to support Japan’s military rise in order to achieve strategic goals. Increases in the capabilities of Japan’s advanced military can lead to the increased possibility of armed conflicts between China and Japan and increase South Korea’s anxiety that Japan will use coercive methods, including military force, in ROK–Japan diplomatic disputes.<sup>163</sup>

Sung-kurl Kim insists that Japan is highly anxious that China could become a hegemonic power over the United States.<sup>164</sup> As a result of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. government faced financial difficulties that forced the implementation of sequestration, and this situation is perceived as stopping the rise of U.S. security capabilities.<sup>165</sup> In contrast to U.S. stagnation, China is maintaining economic and military growth, and this development seems to outstrip Japan’s efforts to cover the power gap left by the United States.<sup>166</sup> China can obtain dominance in East Asia, and considering the weakness of the regional security cooperation system—insufficient to check China’s sole lead and conflicts between nations surrounding history issues—Japan reaches the realistic conclusion that it has to increase its military power through its own efforts.<sup>167</sup>

Japan recognizes that responding to China’s military buildup requires it to “be capable of joint operations” with the United States, which also has focused on the

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<sup>162</sup> Lee, “The Changing Patterns of U.S. Defense Spending,” 36. [All translations from Korean sources are by the author.]

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 36–37.

<sup>164</sup> Sung-kurl Kim, “*Choegeun Ilbon’ui Jungguk’e daehan anbo’insig byeonhwawa daeunghanghyang - 2015nyeong bangwibaegseo naeyongeul jungsimeulo* [Japan’s Response Directions following its Recent Changes of Security Awareness toward China Based on the Japan’s 2015 Defense White Paper],” *Military Forum* 83 (2015): 104, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3355893](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3355893).

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

military area in accordance with the Asia rebalancing policy.<sup>168</sup> Following this logic, Japan tends to fill out the military gap that has emerged between China's rapid military growth and the U.S. military pivot through Japan's own military improvement.<sup>169</sup>

Japan's intention can be seen in the study of Jungchul Lee, who observes that the United States is preparing for military reductions due to sequestration and that Japan is supporting the U.S. military by filling the void created by the reduction.<sup>170</sup> Japan's role is politically possible because the strengthening of the U.S.–Japan alliance on the basis of the rebalancing policy is linked to the U.S. endorsement of a powerfully militarized Japan. Lee regards Japan's advanced military power as the catalyst provoking military growth and arms races elsewhere in Northeast Asia.<sup>171</sup>

This pattern of Japan's militarization is somewhat different than in the past, when Japan used the threat of North Korea to justify improving its military power. According to Ho-yeob Bang, "the issues of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missiles were utilized to provide reasonable cause to Japan's national strategy for nationalism."<sup>172</sup> In other words, whenever North Korea increased the level of nuclear and missile threat, Japan has strengthened its military forces steadily in response to the threats.<sup>173</sup> Preceded by the recognition of North Korean threats, Japan not only has procured "the reasons for improving its military power, but also has established the complementary institutional basis to move to the militarized state."<sup>174</sup> Currently, however, Japan is relying on the

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<sup>168</sup> Kim, "Japan's Response Directions," 109.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Jungchul Lee, "*Miguk'ui jaegyunhyeonghwawa bughan'ui sujeongjuui guggahwa* [US Rebalance and DPRK's Revisionist Strategy]," *Eurasian Studies* 10, no. 4 (December 2013): 141–42, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3339780](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3339780).

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>172</sup> Ho-yeob Bang, "*Bughan'ui haegmisail gaebalgwa Ilbonbangwijeongchaeggwa'ui sanggwangwangye* [The Interrelation Between DPRK's Nuclear and Missile Development and Japan's Defense Policy]," *Korea and Japan Military Culture Study* 17 (2014): 141, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3233573](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3233573).

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 138.

recognition of China's threats—beyond North Korea—and its role as a rebalancing partner to justify arming with more advanced military capabilities.<sup>175</sup>

Concretely, Japan's military strengthening includes the following. First of all, the Japanese government increased defense expenditures to about five trillion yen, the highest defense spending since the end of the Second World War.<sup>176</sup> Also, to prepare for disputes with China, Japan activated amphibian units that are similar those of the U.S. Marine Corps and took charge of offensive missions in the southwestern part of its territory; landing vehicles and MV-22 Osprey aircraft are going to be dispatched in that area, too.<sup>177</sup> The maritime Self-Defense Forces will additionally be armed with conventional submarines, and these submarines will be used to monitor the group of islands near Okinawa and the strait between Taiwan and the Philippines, where Chinese forces pass to move to the Pacific.<sup>178</sup> For the Air Self-Defense Forces, F-35 fighters and tankers for extended range of operations will be introduced, and reconnaissance assets such as the Global Hawk will be reinforced to observe the areas of conflicts.<sup>179</sup> This JSDF military expansion can be thought to target both Chinese threats in a narrow view and any potential enemies in a wide view, so this Japanese military buildup excites adjacent nations including China and aggravates the security dilemma and arms races in Northeast Asia.<sup>180</sup>

### C. CONCLUSION

The Asia rebalancing policy is aiming for peace and prosperity in Asia region, and the policy intends to create peace and stability. But, due to a lack of mutual trust between Washington and Beijing, China misunderstands the military factors in the rebalancing policy, and this misconception has resulted in the military competition of the two powers.

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<sup>175</sup> Kim, "Japan's Response Directions," 117.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 117.

To mediate the military tensions of Northeast Asia, the United States could avoid irritating China if the military factors were excluded from the rebalancing; however, the disappearance of U.S. military leverage in Northeast Asia could result in an extremely unstable security circumstance. Strategic trust in Northeast Asia is absent not only in the U.S.-China relation, but also in the trilateral relation of South Korea, China, and Japan. If U.S. military power loses its effectiveness in this situation, an arms race between other regional countries will become more severe. Also, considering that South Korea and Japan, two strong allies of the United States in Northeast Asia, are under a U.S. security commitment including nuclear deterrence capability, the nuclear arming of these two countries will be inevitable if U.S. military power decreases enough; even nuclear arms races can happen in Northeast Asia. So, the U.S. military policy related to the rebalancing policy can be regarded as beneficial to the stability of Northeast Asia region; however, it requires proper management of the U.S.-China competition.

Contrary to an advantageous U.S. military presence, Japan's military growth has a negative influence on regional stability. Japan's military reinforcement is based on worries over U.S. failures in rebalancing and China's military rise; however, these concerns are just expectations and far from the real world. The reduction of U.S. defense spending and military power influenced by sequestration has not happened yet; even so, it is uncertain how deeply the reduction will affect U.S. combat power in Northeast Asia. U.S. military power is still maintaining a primary position in Northeast Asia region.

In addition, it is uncertain how far China's military growth will be sustained. Of course, China's military capability is in a different class from South Korea's and Japan's power; however, compared to the United States, China's military is not so powerful. In addition, China's economic growth rate is slowing down, and due to this, China's military may lose its growth engines. This means that China's military can fail to accomplish the growth expected in the current situation. So, U.S. military hegemony in Northeast Asia may be maintained rather than overtaken by China. Considering this status quo and in anticipation of its continuity, Japan's powerful militarization is not essential in Northeast Asia; rather, it is unnecessary because it increases security anxiety in the region and fuels the possibility of arms races.

The reason that Japan's militarization provokes South Korea and China is the worry that Japan can use its military power improperly based on an incorrect perception of history. Japan is neither admitting its responsibility nor apologizing for its aggressive behavior in the Pacific War. This attitude makes South Korea and China once again regard Japan as an expansionist aggressor as it becomes a powerfully militarized country. Considering this, South Korea and China evaluate Japan's military buildup as threatening behavior.

Also, considering that China understands Japan's military growth as interlinked with the rebalancing, Japan's pursuit of military power gives a negative image to the rebalancing policy by causing China to see the rebalancing as more threatening to its national interests.

Holistically, U.S. military capabilities concentrating on Northeast Asia region in accordance with the rebalancing policy can be evaluated as contributing to regional stability. But, Japanese military power growing under the title of supporting the U.S. rebalancing has a negative impact not only because Japan's military growth distorts the original purpose of the rebalancing, but also because the military buildup threatens the security of other Northeast Asian countries.

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#### **IV. THE NUCLEAR ASPECT OF THE ASIA REBALANCING POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON NORTHEAST ASIA**

The U.S. rebalancing policy toward Asia is motivated to secure U.S. interests in the growing Asia region. With the vision of Asia's economic burst in the near future, the United States concluded that the possibility of U.S. economic development was closely related to Asia region. So, the U.S. government seeks to improve relationships with regional countries and to participate in multilateral institutions in order to facilitate Asian economic dynamics. Along with these diplomatic efforts, the U.S. military also took the mission of securing the regional environment to ensure peace, stability, and the continuous growth of the Asian states.

However, confrontations in Northeast Asia have become severe, and the nuclear issue is playing an especially prevalent role in hindering the stability and cooperation in this area that is necessary to mitigate confrontations and promote regional development. North Korea continues to improve its nuclear capabilities, and the intensity of nuclear threat is rising. Despite the U.S. extended deterrence commitment, the South Korean and Japanese publics feel some level of insecurity, and some public opinion polls in the two countries show support for nuclear arming. China is resisting South Korean and Japanese deployment of missile defense systems to protect its own security, and this Chinese attitude is making the security problem more difficult.

This situation is unfavorable for the realization of the U.S. rebalancing policy. The rebalancing seeks a more secure regional situation for vigorous economic cooperation, but the current nuclear issues of the region are not being managed adequately and are not contributing to the U.S. goal.

Therefore, considering this relation between the regional nuclear issues and the aim of the U.S. rebalancing policy, it is reasonable to discuss U.S. efforts in the nuclear field while evaluating the U.S. rebalancing policy. Of course, the U.S. nuclear policy is a global one, so the influence of the policy is not limited to Northeast Asia region. But, actual methods to control regional nuclear issues are provided in tailored forms, so the nuclear policy in Northeast Asia can be regarded as a specific one.

In addition, the U.S. rebalancing policy is part of the U.S. grand strategy, so the policy is targeting more critical interests that embrace the fruits of success of the U.S. nuclear policy in Northeast Asia region. So, this chapter regards the U.S. nuclear policy in Northeast Asia as a part of the U.S. rebalancing efforts based on the viewpoint that the nuclear policy affects the security environment of the region, and tries to analyze how the U.S. rebalancing efforts with respect to the nuclear issues contribute to the regional stability of Northeast Asia. This analysis includes three aspects of U.S. efforts on the nuclear problems of Northeast Asia region: extended deterrence commitments, efforts to denuclearize North Korea, and controlling nuclear ambition in South Korea and Japan.

#### A. EXTENDED DETERRENCE COMMITMENT

The concept of extended deterrence began with the North Atlantic Treaty, which launched the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949.<sup>181</sup> In 1954, through U.S. nuclear strategy documents and the speech of former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, extended deterrence was settled as a method of security assurance to allied countries; shortly after this, South Korea and Japan—the U.S. key allies in Northeast Asia—were included under extended deterrence.<sup>182</sup> Japan began receiving extended deterrence coverage based on “the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security” of 1960.<sup>183</sup> In the case of South Korea, the U.S.–ROK Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953 contained the idea that the United States would protect South Korea from the threat of North Korea, meaning that the establishment of the U.S.–ROK alliance itself was the starting point of supplying extended deterrence to South Korea.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Seung-Keun Lee, “Yu’leob’anbowa hwagjang’eogji: NATOeseo’ui gyeongheomgwa jeongchaegjeog hamui [European Security and Extended Deterrence: Experiences in NATO and Lessons],” *National Defense Study* 56, no. 2 (June 2013): 25–26, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3159081](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3159081).

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>183</sup> Wade L. Huntley, “Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero: U.S. Nuclear Reductions and Extended Deterrence in East Asia,” *Nonproliferation Review* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 309–10, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10736700.2013.799945#.VgI-B7S8DwU>.

<sup>184</sup> Sang Hyun Lee, “Miguk’ui atae hwagjang’eogji jeongchaeggwa Han’guk anbo [U.S. Extended Deterrence Policy in the Asia-Pacific and Its Implications for South Korea’s Security],” *National Defense Study* 56, no. 2 (June 2013): 8, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3159080](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3159080).

In contrast to the fact that extended deterrence is a crucial security measure to the U.S. allies of Northeast Asia, extended deterrence is not welcomed by China. According to Linton Brooks and Mira Rapp-Hooper, there are two kinds of Chinese reactions to the U.S. extended deterrence. First of all, China focuses not only on the loss of mutual vulnerability between the United States and China by the dispatch of the U.S. missile defense system, but also on the notion that Chinese nuclear arsenals can be destroyed by U.S. precision attack munitions.<sup>185</sup> Jennifer Bradley gives a more specific explanation for China's concern. In the 2010 *Nuclear Posture Review* (NPR), the United States announced a strategy that the U.S. could attack the targets of U.S. nuclear adversaries with conventional weapons on the basis of improved precision attack capabilities.<sup>186</sup> The problem is that these conventional forces have a higher possibility of being used than nuclear weapons do, and this possibility can create security vulnerability for an opponent.<sup>187</sup> This concept stems from the point that conventional forces are not under the influence of a "nuclear taboo."<sup>188</sup>

China's other worry about extended deterrence is that the U.S. allies with extended deterrence become emboldened by the U.S. commitment.<sup>189</sup> Especially in Northeast Asia, this Chinese concern could become a reality through the conflict over the Senkaku (Diaoyu in Chinese) Islands. For instance, the U.S.–Japan Defense Cooperation Guideline—which was revised in April 2015—specifies the role of U.S. "strike power" while countering an attack on Japan.<sup>190</sup> Although the role is limited to support of the JSDF, this is meaningful because the involvement of U.S. armed forces is almost assured if armed conflict between Japanese and Chinese navy and air powers occurs in the

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<sup>185</sup> Brooks and Rapp-Hooper, "Extended Deterrence," 290–91.

<sup>186</sup> Jennifer Bradley, "Increasing Uncertainty: The Dangers of Relying on Conventional Forces for Nuclear Deterrence," *Air & Space Power Journal* 29, no. 4 (July/August 2015): 74–75, ProQuest (1711201546).

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>189</sup> Brooks and Rapp-Hooper, "Extended Deterrence," 292.

<sup>190</sup> "The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation," Japan Ministry of Defense, last modified April 27, 2015, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/anpo/shishin\\_20150427e.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/shishin_20150427e.html).

Senkaku Islands.<sup>191</sup> It is possible for China to expect that Japan, knowing that U.S. involvement is assured, will choose a more aggressive policy in a situation in which conflict may be imminent. In its official reaction to the revision of the U.S.–Japan Defense Cooperation Guideline, China raised the level of tension by condemning the U.S. intervention and warning that the United States and Japan should not undervalue China’s capabilities to resist their joint efforts.<sup>192</sup>

The U.S. extended deterrence commitment and China’s fear of aggressive reactions to the U.S. security provision remain an unsolved problem. To dispel China’s worries and to let China believe that the U.S. extended deterrence policy will not threaten China, the United States needs to improve its relationship with China. What the United States fears, however, is that an advanced relationship with China is perceived as weakening its security guarantee to South Korea and Japan, and based on this assessment, the two allies would defect from the nonproliferation efforts of international society.<sup>193</sup> Brooks and Rapp-Hooper names this the “security trilemma,” and this trilemma is still harassing the United States as the unsettled issue of Northeast Asia.<sup>194</sup>

From the perspective of receiving extended deterrence, South Korea and Japan can react in ways that make the security circumstance unstable if they believe there are problems with the credibility of extended deterrence. According to a study by Wade Huntley, extended deterrence to South Korea and Japan could be affected by the U.S. nuclear disarmament policy. To Japan, it was a problem that the U.S. extended deterrence might not operate credibly due to the U.S. downsized nuclear arsenals.<sup>195</sup> Another problem was that, in the situation that the quantity of U.S. nuclear weapons shrank to the

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<sup>191</sup> “The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation.”

<sup>192</sup> Yeonchul Sung and Yunhyeong Gil, “*Miildongmaeng ganghwa nohgo dong Asia ginjang pago...junggug banbal bongyeoghwa* [Rise of East Asia Tension by Strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance, Counterblast of China],” *The Hankyoreh News*, May 2, 2015, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/international/international\\_general/689490.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/international/international_general/689490.html).

<sup>193</sup> Jeffrey G. Lewis, “China’s Nuclear Modernization: Surprise, Restraint, and Uncertainty,” in *Strategic Asia 2013–14: Asia in the Second Nuclear Age*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark, and Travis Tanner (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2013), 85.

<sup>194</sup> Brooks and Rapp-Hooper, “Extended Deterrence,” 292.

<sup>195</sup> Huntley, “Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero,” 310.

same amount as China, it would be difficult to deter provocative Chinese behavior, such as local disputes surrounding the Senkaku Islands.<sup>196</sup>

In South Korea, extended deterrence was questioned due to North Korea's continuous nuclear development and military provocations, China's military modernization, and the U.S. nuclear arms reduction and its posture of departing from dependence on nuclear weapons.<sup>197</sup> For these reasons, South Korea considered whether U.S. extended deterrence—predicated upon U.S. nuclear retaliation—was less credible for conflicts in Northeast Asia that are smaller and involve only conventional weapons.<sup>198</sup> On this basis, concern over the credibility of extended deterrence was aroused, and this was linked to South Korean reactions, especially South Korean discussion of the return of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons or possession of the independent capability of producing nuclear weapons.

Huntley says that the United States managed Japan's concerns not only through providing reassurance to Japan by producing the U.S. strategy documents containing the U.S. extended deterrence commitment, but also expressing the U.S. intention of supplying conventional efforts in low-level conflicts in accordance with the concept of "dynamic deterrence."<sup>199</sup> Also, he points out that the scenario of U.S.-China nuclear equivalence is unlikely because U.S. nuclear disarmament will not take the direction of yielding nuclear superiority to China.<sup>200</sup> Regarding South Korea's apprehensions, nuclear deterrence against attacks to U.S. allies can be achieved by the nuclear forces of the U.S. mainland, and what is needed in deterring local conflicts such as the attacks on ROK Navy corvette *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong Island is "tailored conventional capabilities," not deployment of nuclear arms in South Korea.<sup>201</sup> Because nuclear weapons in South Korea are not credible for retaliation against North Korea's local and

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<sup>196</sup> Huntley, "Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero," 310–11.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 319, 321, 323, 324.

<sup>198</sup> Brooks and Rapp-Hooper, "Extended Deterrence," 281.

<sup>199</sup> Huntley, "Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero," 311–13.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 324.

conventional provocations, it is essential to express credibility in other ways, like announcing that the United States and South Korea will react firmly against North Korea's military action.<sup>202</sup>

In contrast to the difficulties in controlling China's reaction to extended deterrence, control of the reactions of South Korea and Japan was successful. The U.S. extended deterrence commitment still has crucial meaning to the security of the two allies, and the deep trust of the two countries in the extended deterrence commitment seems to be unchangeable for a while. The key variable that could change the current climate is if China's fast-rising nuclear capabilities increasingly threaten the two U.S. allies' security, and in that situation, abandonment of the U.S. nuclear disarmament policy and an altered nuclear strategy in Northeast Asia will be inevitable.<sup>203</sup>

## **B. DENUCLEARIZATION OF NORTH KOREA**

The Obama administration's policy to denuclearize North Korea is called "strategic patience."<sup>204</sup> This means that the United States continues to pressure North Korea while waiting for it to return to the negotiation table.<sup>205</sup> The major tools to pressure North Korea are utilizing regulations of the international society, acquiring cooperation of the neighboring countries, and imposing sanctions.<sup>206</sup>

At the international level, the U.S. has led diverse efforts worldwide toward regulating North Korea on the basis of United Nations (UN) resolutions. To gain the cooperation of adjacent countries, the United States has been concurrently working with South Korea and Japan and has requested China to take a stronger posture toward North Korea.<sup>207</sup> In addition to these methods, Washington has been imposing economic

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<sup>202</sup> Huntley, "Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero," 325.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>204</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions, 1 January Through 31 December 2010* (Washington, DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, March 2011), 7, <http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/wmd-acq2010.pdf>.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

sanctions autonomously. These sanctions started with the Bush administration's focus on the interdiction of the circulation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD); with the Obama administration, the targets of sanctions have been extended to include all of North Korea's weapons and luxury items.<sup>208</sup> Also, in order to raise the efficiency of the sanctions, efforts to control trade with North Korean companies that are related to the circulation of targeted materials have been combined with the sanctions.<sup>209</sup>

But, North Korea's reaction to the diplomatic and economic efforts of the international society and the United States has been expressed in unexpected and unintended ways. According to John Park, the pressures on North Korea made North Korea's acquisition routes more complex and advanced, rather than blocking the acquisition of materials related to nuclear development.<sup>210</sup> Under the restriction of international society and the United States, North Korea experienced a certain level of difficulty in acquiring equipment for its nuclear development; however, North Korea overcame this situation through increasing trade with China.<sup>211</sup> Ethnic Chinese with Korean language skills especially contributed to North Korea's procurement of nuclear development tools in China. These ethnic Chinese benefitted from their ability to cross the border between China and North Korea freely.<sup>212</sup> Thus, these middlemen could purchase nuclear-related equipment from foreign companies located in China without any restrictions and sell the equipment to North Korea.<sup>213</sup>

Reportedly, China also benefitted economically from this trade with North Korea. As North Korea's trading routes became limited by the international sanctions, North Korea had no other option but to rely on its trade with China, and this meant that China's

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<sup>208</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Acquisition of Technology*, 7.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> John S. Park, "The Key to the North Korean Targeted Sanctions Puzzle," *The Washington Quarterly* (November 2014): 207, [https://twq.elliott.gwu.edu/sites/twq.elliott.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Park\\_Fall2014.pdf](https://twq.elliott.gwu.edu/sites/twq.elliott.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Park_Fall2014.pdf).

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

dealers could take better profits from their business with North Korea.<sup>214</sup> According to the statements of North Korean defectors, the trading commissions Chinese dealers demanded from North Korean traders increased after the U.S. and UN sanctions, and the increased profits that Chinese traders could get were a factor that made China–DPRK trade more vigorous.<sup>215</sup> Ironically, a variety of sanctions that are imposed by the United States and international organizations have made North Korea more uncontrollable by causing North Korea to devise advanced ways to sustain its nuclear development trade anyway.<sup>216</sup>

The next goal of North Korea would be to decrease dependency upon China and to assure profits through other countries apart from China.<sup>217</sup> In order to control this situation and to induce North Korea to negotiate, the United States and the UN need to curtail the new routes of North Korea’s trade.<sup>218</sup> For instance, efforts to detect North Korea’s international trading groups that are concealed by China’s large economic scale and complex international ports would be effective.<sup>219</sup> Furthermore, as Kim’s regime starves for resources, efforts by North Korea to open business with rogue states and terrorists should be searched for and blocked.<sup>220</sup>

The Chinese reaction to the U.S. policy to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula diverges from the U.S. intention. Chinese cooperation is necessary to denuclearize North Korea, but China’s attitude is currently ambiguous. China officially supports the denuclearization of North Korea; however, China also wishes to maintain North Korea’s current regime due to the geopolitical value of North Korea and economic benefits stemming from trade with North Korea.<sup>221</sup> These benefits impede China’s joining the

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<sup>214</sup> Park, “The Key to the North Korean Targeted Sanctions Puzzle,” 207.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 210–11.

<sup>217</sup> Park, “Nuclear Ambition and Tension on the Korean Peninsula,” 196.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Acquisition of Technology*, 10–11.



U.S. and international efforts to press North Korea's regime and to follow through with denuclearization on the Korean peninsula.

### C. CONTROLLING SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN

There is strong evidence that Japan—one of the solid U.S. allies in Northeast Asia—could become a nuclear-armed state. First is the estimation that there would be almost no technical limitation for Japan to possess its own nuclear weapons. This judgment is underpinned by Japan's spent nuclear fuel reprocessing technology, plutonium possession, and H-IIA rocket launching technology. Second, the historical fact that Japan tried to develop nuclear weapons during the Second World War shows past interest. Not only was Japan investing in a nuclear weapon program while the Second World War was in progress, but even after Prime Minister Sato declared the Three Nonnuclear Principles, Japanese officials reportedly pursued joint nuclear weapon development with German scientists.<sup>222</sup> Finally, adding to the technological and historical possibilities, it can be anticipated that a nuclear-armed Japan could result if Japan decides that U.S. extended deterrence has lost credibility. U.S. extended deterrence has been a major factor that has controlled Japan's aspiration for nuclear arming.<sup>223</sup> The flipside of this fact is that Japan's potential pursuit of nuclear attack capabilities will increase only when extended deterrence does not assure security in Japan.<sup>224</sup>

South Korea's breakout is potentially possible for similar reasons: South Korea could strive to deter its security threats with its own nuclear ability if U.S. extended deterrence does not seem to be credible. Considering that South Korea endeavored to make nuclear bombs twice in 1970 and 1977, it is conceivable that South Korea will attempt to make nuclear weapons again. The announcement of the reduction of U.S. forces in South Korea in 1970 damaged the credibility of the U.S. security commitment, and lowered credibility was connected to South Korea's pursuit of independent national

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<sup>222</sup> Namgu Jeong, "Wonjeon geulimja'e bichin haegmugi [Nuclear Weapons on the Shadow of Nuclear Power Plants]," *Japan Space* 10 (2011): 291, [http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis\\_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3345484](http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3345484).

<sup>223</sup> Huntley, "Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero," 316.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

defense capabilities and nuclear weapon development.<sup>225</sup> The attempt in 1977 happened due to a rise in South Korea's security anxiety after President Jimmy Carter tried to withdraw all U.S. forces from the Korean peninsula.<sup>226</sup> Similar security concerns have emerged in South Korean society after several long-range missile tests and nuclear tests by North Korea. In a poll conducted after North Korea's nuclear test in 2013, more than half of the participants answered that they felt a necessity to possess or make nuclear weapons, and opposition to nuclear armament had decreased from previous poll results.<sup>227</sup>

Therefore, if desires for nuclear arsenals are not managed properly, both South Korea and Japan could evacuate from international nonproliferation efforts, and this breakout will cause complex problems. First of all, if any of both allies starts its nuclear weapon program, this fact can influence the nonproliferation will of other country, even Taiwan. This means that justification of nuclear weapons in one country can serve as the basis for others' nuclearizing because South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan have similar security environments. Furthermore, if South Korea moves to obtain nuclear arms, this will drive the impossibility of denuclearization of North Korea. This is because South Korea's nuclear weapons will create a new cause to drive North Korea's nuclear research and nuclear weapon production. Also, taking into account that China that does not welcome any kind of conflict on the Korean peninsula, South Korea's nuclear arsenals will stimulate China's antagonism, making China's cooperation for denuclearization more impossible.

To avoid this complex situation caused by South Korea's or Japan's nuclear arming, the United States has tried to improve the reliability of extended deterrence. With regard to Japan, it is appropriate that the U.S. extended deterrence commitment focuses

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<sup>225</sup> Rebecca K.C. Hersman and Robert Peters, "Nuclear U-Turns: Learning from South Korean and Taiwanese Rollback," *Nonproliferation Review* 13, no. 3 (November 2006): 540–41, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10736700601071629>.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 542.

<sup>227</sup> Younglim Hong, "Gugmin 3myeongjung 2myeong ulido haek gajyeoya [Two Thirds of South Korean People Feel Necessity of Possession of Nuclear Bomb]," *Chosun Daily News*, February 21, 2013, [http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2013/02/21/2013022100316.html?related\\_all](http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/02/21/2013022100316.html?related_all); Huntley, "Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero," 322–23.

on useful conventional weapons rather than nuclear weapons because the most likely threats Japan faces are low-level conflicts, not full-scale wars, and convergence on this perspective has already formed between Washington and Tokyo.<sup>228</sup> In addition to this shared notion, the establishment of a missile defense system and the presence of U.S. forces in Japan provide security assurance to the Japanese government, thus Japan can recede from the security goal of nuclear weapon possession.<sup>229</sup>

Extended deterrence also functions as a key element inhibiting South Korea from seeking nuclear arms. The role of extended deterrence for South Korea is stipulated in the joint statement of the 2009 Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), which describes the joint roles of “the U.S. nuclear umbrella, conventional attack capabilities, and missile defense capabilities.”<sup>230</sup> Furthermore, to upgrade the effectiveness and credibility of extended deterrence, the United States and South Korea agreed to establish the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee (EDPC) and conduct regular extended deterrence method operating exercises, also known as Table Top Exercises (TTXs).<sup>231</sup> Specifically, TTX is providing opportunities to train to use the assets of extended deterrence in response to North Korean attacks and what procedures should be followed in the process of decision-making.<sup>232</sup> It is unclear how effectively and concretely extended deterrence will be improved through these institutions because they do not strongly contribute to demonstrate the U.S. will to retaliate against North Korea, but these systems do successfully quash the security concerns of South Korean policy-makers and any motivation for nuclear armament.

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<sup>228</sup> Huntley, “Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero,” 316.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> “The U.S. Defense Commitment to Republic of Korea: Extended Deterrence,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed September 18, 2015, [http://www.mofa.go.kr/trade/areaissue/noramerica/nuclear/index.jsp?menu=m\\_30\\_30\\_30&tabmenu=t\\_4](http://www.mofa.go.kr/trade/areaissue/noramerica/nuclear/index.jsp?menu=m_30_30_30&tabmenu=t_4).

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

## **D. CONCLUSION**

The U.S. policy of rebalancing toward Asia is closely related to the security environment of Asia. In Northeast Asia, the rebalancing policy focuses on accelerating cooperation between regional countries and maximizing economic prosperity, and for this goal, the security of each country has to be guaranteed. From the perspective that the nuclear issue of Northeast Asia has great effects on regional security, emphasis on the nuclear issue is essential in discussing the rebalancing policy in Northeast Asia.

In this chapter, the effects of U.S. nuclear-related efforts toward Northeast Asia were evaluated through three aspects: extended deterrence, denuclearization of North Korea, and management of South Korea's and Japan's nuclear desires. The positive assessment can be made that extended deterrence with improved credibility has provided security confidence to the allied states of Northeast Asia and has successfully controlled their desire for nuclear weapons. However, more time is needed to evaluate U.S. efforts to control China's aggressive reaction appropriately and to denuclearize North Korea.

Taken as a whole, U.S. nuclear policy can synthetically be evaluated as not only contributing to Northeast Asia region's security in ways essential to the realization of the U.S. rebalancing goal, but also benefiting regional stability. This evaluation can be supported with the observation that U.S. extended deterrence has played a critical role to keep South Korea and Japan from nuclear arming options by providing solutions to each states' security problems. Also, any military tension generated by extended deterrence cannot be seen to contribute to regional instability because other sources of antagonism among South Korea, Japan, and China—possibly originating from historical facts or China's military rising—would not be controlled any more effectively if U.S. extended deterrence loses its credibility. In addition, although the sanctions applied to North Korea have not achieved much toward its denuclearization up to now, a positive expectation for these sanctions is possible in the long term because those efforts will constantly weaken North Korea's regime and motivate the leadership to give up dependency on nuclear arsenals.

## V. CONCLUSION

This thesis focused on evaluating whether or not the Asia rebalancing policy has contributed to the regional stability of Northeast Asia. Motivated by assessments of the economic potential of the Asian region, the United States started its rebalancing efforts toward the region. The rebalancing policy was designed to improve both relationships and cooperation with regional states and also to maximize the economic dynamics of Asia by supporting a peaceful security environment.

But, in Northeast Asia, the regional situation does not seem to support the goal of the U.S. policy. Despite the rebalancing efforts by the United States, the Northeast Asian states are still facing several security issues. Although the relationship among them has improved, it is not enough to produce an economic boom. So, this thesis has analyzed three aspects—diplomatic, military, and nuclear—of the Asia rebalancing policy, while concentrating on the reactions of the regional players toward the U.S. approach.

With respect to the diplomatic aspect, the Asia rebalancing policy is contributing to the stable security environment of Northeast Asia. The United States has approached this region in two ways: participating in multilateral systems for cooperation and strengthening its bilateral relationships with the regional countries. The U.S. efforts to approach through multilateral security institutions are conflicting with China's resistance because of China's worries of harm to its national interests. Due to this resistance, cooperation in multilateral systems is difficult. The presence of the United States in multilateral systems, however, is necessary to prevent the emergence of China-centered regional institutions, in which regional countries—except China—would not be able to pursue their national rights and could see their national interests harmed. Likewise, the U.S. bilateral approach is significant for two key allies in Northeast Asia—South Korea and Japan—because strengthening of alliances means increased security assurance for them. In addition, this consolidation of alliances functions as a deterrent of an arms race and nuclear arming.

With respect to the military aspect, the U.S. rebalancing effort toward Asia is playing a vital role in guaranteeing the secure environment for South Korea and Japan. So, U.S. military efforts could be seen as a contribution to regional stability. Although the ASB concept seems to confront the Chinese A2/AD strategy and promote military tensions in Northeast Asia, regional countries would experience a serious security vacuum if U.S. military power decreases. As a result, this feeling of insecurity could cause a dangerous military competition between Northeast Asian states. In this sense, U.S. military presence and its fortification would be beneficial to peaceful relationships within the region. Another element that could cause unstable reactions by the regional nations is a concern that sequestration could weaken U.S. military capability. This future prospect not only could make China more emboldened and aggressive to neighboring countries, but it could also motivate Japan to build up its military power. However, considering that U.S. military power in Northeast Asia is thriving and that the influence of sequestration in the regions is still uncertain, one could expect that the strong U.S. security guarantee accompanied by the Asia rebalancing policy would last and positively affect regional stability.

With respect to the nuclear aspect, this thesis assumed that the U.S. nuclear policy in Northeast Asia is part of the U.S. rebalancing efforts. This assumption is based on the judgments that the nuclear issues of the region are closely related to the realization of the goals of the rebalancing policy and that the regionally tailored nuclear policy can be subjected to the Asia rebalancing policy. The U.S. nuclear efforts in this region have been analyzed in three different aspects and evaluated as positive contributors to regional stability. U.S. extended deterrence commitments and related U.S. capabilities have successfully assured security for both South Korea and Japan. As a result, these countries have little desire for nuclear arming despite the reduction of U.S. nuclear arsenals. Moreover, the efforts to mitigate Chinese concerns over U.S. extended deterrence commitments and to denuclearize North Korea are being continued, so positive progress on these issues will likely appear in the near future.

Considering the brief history of the Asia rebalancing policy, it is too early to determine if the policy is or will be effective. But, so far, the policy has been successful

at contributing to regional stability in Northeast Asia. Moreover, investigation of the hypothesis of this thesis—the Asia rebalancing policy affects Northeast Asia stability and instability through the Northeast Asian countries’ various reactions to the U.S. rebalancing—has shown that the role of these other states can be a critical factor. U.S. efforts to meet the rise of China by maintaining its diplomatic and military presence in Northeast Asia will not contribute to stability if it also promotes a broad arms race among all the countries of the region. Also, the importance of extended nuclear deterrence to Japan and South Korea is clearly a crucial factor influencing how U.S. nuclear policy affects stability in Northeast Asia.

The important intermediate role that these other countries play in shaping regional stability outcomes is likely to continue. There are several elements that can change regional stability conditions in the future.

First, China’s antagonism toward U.S. rebalancing must be properly managed. China is resisting various elements of the rebalancing policy: the U.S. multilateral and bilateral diplomatic approaches, the ASB concept and dispatch of high-tech weapons, and continued security commitments to U.S. allies. This attitude stems from China’s worries that Washington is trying to contain Beijing, and because of this, it could very well raise tensions in Northeast Asia. The United States has tried to overcome this distrust through bilateral meetings and official announcements. These positive efforts could be an answer to managing China’s distrust and antagonism towards the United States. But, considering that the mutual trust between Washington and Beijing is imperfect, both countries should be careful in maintaining their fragile relationship. If the distrust between the two escalates through a future dispute, China could reposition itself as fully hostile to U.S. rebalancing efforts. This hostility could cause a U.S.-China confrontation that could harm the regional stability of Northeast Asia.

Second, a strong security commitment by the United States has to be maintained in Northeast Asia. Any decline in the credibility of U.S. security commitments may cause several negative situations that could contribute to regional instability. China may consider the weakening of U.S. credibility as a chance to expand its leverage on conflictual issues, and this development could threaten the national interests of South

Korea and Japan. To respond to China, the two states might take offensive diplomatic and military postures rather than concede and cooperate with China. Also, weakening U.S. security capability provides a motivation for Japan to strengthen its military power, which may cause security anxiety in neighboring countries. In addition, weakening U.S. power could result in nuclear arming of South Korea and Japan, both of which are completely relying on the U.S. extended deterrence commitment on nuclear issues.

Finally, a framework to manage military competition is needed in Northeast Asia. Japan's military growth and the expansion of its action areas, accompanied by the U.S. rebalancing policy, are seen as a threat by South Korea as well as China. South Korea worries that Japan will advance to the Korean peninsula in an emergency, and China worries that Japan will become more aggressive in maritime disputes in the East China Sea. Currently, it seems impossible to restrain Japan's military development. Considering that it is mutually beneficial to President Obama's rebalancing policy and Prime Minister Abe's political goals, Japan's military development is likely to continue. Mixed with China's military rise and South Korea's military modernization, Japan's pursuit of military power can lead to military collisions in Northeast Asia, where trust among regional states is not strong. So, to avoid armed conflicts, promote the level of mutual trust, and establish a secure environment necessary for the realization of the Asia rebalancing policy, institutional tools for managing conflict and building trust are essential in the region.



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